Writing Key Ideas: Strategies (and the cognitive processes that support students’ acquisition of skills)

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Writing in school (and beyond)

1. Learning to Write – demonstrating proficiency with writing skills
   – Brief Writes (claim 2, CAT items)
     • Understanding the different discourse categories (purposes)
     • Understanding purpose-specific traits

2. Writing to show learning
   – Short Answer (Claim 1 & 4 – PT & CAT)
     • Understanding the questions
     • Summary & analysis writing

3. Writing to learn

4. Writing that shows learning demonstrates skill
   – Full Write (Claim 2, Performance Task)
     • Synthesis
Three Discourse Categories

• Narrative
  – For the sake of story – to entertain
  – In the service of other purposes – to help inform/explain or support claims

• Informational/Explanatory
  – Inform: support a main idea
  – Explain: thesis-driven

• Opinion/Argument
  – Opinion: reasons to support
  – Argue: evidence-based claims
Smarter Balanced Claim 2 “traits”

**Purpose/Organization**: How texts are structured/organized for an audience and writing purpose –

- “Introductions” (or beginnings)
- “Conclusions” (or endings)
- Progression of ideas (including transition strategies that signal relationships)
- Focus
The “problem” with formula writing

- Disclaimer: all academic (and most non-academic) writing is formulaic
  - However, there is more than one formula!

- Does formula writing
  - Allow students to focus on development of ideas (because the organization of the piece has been given to them)?
  - Does formula writing force students to “fit” their ideas into a prescribed form?

OR

- Does formula writing force students to “fit” their ideas into a prescribed form?
Read like a Writer; Write like a Reader

• Goal: Students learn how authors structure (organize) and craft text

• Benefits:
  – Allows them to “see” other (discipline-specific) forms
  – Value added: makes them better readers

• How:
  – Back mapping - have them create the graphic organizer – or craft the outline (AVID) for a piece of text.
  – Use “Mentor texts.”
Smarter Balanced Claim 2 “traits”

Evidence/Elaboration* : How texts are developed –

– The effective selection and integration of information &/or evidence [from available sources]

– Consistent and effective style and word choices (to achieve purpose for audience)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SBAC [informational/explanatory]</th>
<th>AVID (MS writing – expository)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Specific purposespecific vocabulary</td>
<td>• More information about where, why, which one;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Statistics (as appropriate for grade level)</td>
<td>• Additional facts such as statistics, dates, time spans;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Evidence (includes data – survey or other – and/or research information)</td>
<td>• Examples to illustrate main points;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Ideas or points - explained and developed</td>
<td>• Direct quotes from experts;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Description</td>
<td>• Definitions of technical words or unique usages of words are used;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Definition</td>
<td>• Explanations or reasons that further clarify points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Process/Procedure</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Smarter Balanced Claim 2 “traits”

**Conventions**: Language Use (Editing)

- Capitalization
- Punctuation
- Spelling
- Grammar Usage
  - Including sentence formation
  - including some “style” flaws
Grammar approaches

• AVID materials integrate grammar usage logically and meaningfully:
  – MS – indefinite pronouns w/in informational [explanatory] writing – why is it so useful here?
  – Passive/Active voice -
Convert Rubrics to Check Sheets

- Have STUDENTS do the converting –
  - Demonstrates their level of understanding
  - Allows them to use “student-friendly” language
- For writing, separate Revision and Editing processes

AVID MS writing
p. 95 – checklist for details for expository or technical writing
Language Standard Editing - Grade 6

A = always; S = sometimes; L = limited

_______ Use pronouns in the proper case: subjective, objective, possessive
_______ Use correct pronouns: myself, ourselves
_______ Use varied punctuation: commas, parentheses, dashes
_______ Maintain consistency in style and tone
_______ Use infinitives and infinitive phrases correctly
_______ Use a variety of simple and compound sentences
_______ Use correct imperative and interrogative sentences
_______ Correct inappropriate shifts in pronoun number and person
_______ Use a variety of independent and subordinate clauses
_______ Use a variety of conjunctions: coordinating & subordinating
“No excuses” list

For grade 6, correct use of language conventions from previous 5 grades would be “implied”
Other writing strategies

• Design well-written prompts
  – *Always* write out the answer or a sample essay

• Have students deconstruct prompts
  – Essays (Claim 2 full-writes) RAMPS [AVID]: role, audience, mode, purpose, situation
  – Short Answer (Claim 1 & 4) – AVID strategies such as “circle the verbs and underline the task”
Writing to show learning

• Comprehension ≅ “meeting of the minds” [work out an understanding with the author - Doug Buehl]

• Challenge is for students to understand the question and know what’s expected in a good answer to that question

Constructed Response “Short Answer” questions are used for Claim 1 (& 4)
Levels of DOK

LEVEL ONE - RECALL
Recall of a fact, information, or procedure

LEVEL TWO – SKILL/CONCEPT
Use information or conceptual knowledge

LEVEL THREE – STRATEGIC THINKING
Reasoning, developing a plan

LEVEL FOUR – EXTENDED THINKING
Requires an investigation, collection of data and analysis of results

Most often used for SR and short CR questions

Essay, re-search writing
Determine the Rigor of this Item

- What DOK level does this item represent?
- What modifications could you make to the question to make it more rigorous?

Examine the following political cartoon and answer the following questions.
1. What does the snake in this cartoon represent?
2. Whom is the snake attacking?

http://www.state.nj.us/education/AchieveNJ/
Examine the following political cartoon. Use *details* from the cartoon to:
1. Explain the symbolism of the snake in the political cartoon.
2. Explain why the artist used children to represent free press, free speech, and honest opinion.
Compare CRV with AVID
Costa verbs

Highest Level - Applying
Evaluate Generalize Speculate
If/Then Hypothesize Forecast
Judge Idealize Apply a Principle Imagine Predict

Middle Level - Processing
Compare Contrast Classify
Sort Distinguish Explain (Why)
Infer Sequence Analyze
Synthesize Make Analogies Reason

Lowest Level - Gathering
Complete Count Define
Describe Identify List
Match Name Observe
Recite Select Scan

Disagree on this one...
Speculate: Why did Costa put summarize on 1 & 3?
Teachers often assume that if students cannot get the literal level questions (“who,” “what,” “where,” “when”), then there is little point in pursuing interpretative or critical thinking questions. Often, this is not the case. Try reversing the order of questions. The following example uses “Goldilocks” — 

AVID uses 3 Little Pigs and *The Lion, Witch and Wardrobe* (Section 4: Inquiry – MS)
Question Order: Literal to HOTS

Determining (Literal)  Interpreting (Inferential)  Critical (Evaluative)

1) What was Goldilocks doing out in the woods? (taking a walk)

2) What word would you use to describe her character? (“rude” or “adventurous” or “curious”)

3) Do you think Goldilocks’ behavior was appropriate? (G’s behavior was/wasn’t appropriate because )
1) If you were directing the movie *Goldilocks*, who would you cast as Goldilocks?

2) Why is ________ a good choice?

3) What happened in the story to support your choice?
Use text details from photos or images as well as print text

AVID has nice resource: Analyzing Multi-media (p. 197)
It’s not always a problem with the question...

• Often, the question will invite a higher DOK response, but kids will offer a lower DOK answer. And…too often we give “half credit” for these inferior answers. Solutions?

• Short Answer (Claim 1 & 4)
  - AVID strategies such as “circle the verbs and underline the task”
  - Guess the Question
  - Model with example/non-example
  - QAR
High School AVID materials – Essential Skill 4: Integrating Sources into Texts – distinguishes between

• One sentence summary of [text]
• A longer summary, based upon the structure of the original, with one sentence representing each paragraph

-GIST strategy

-Student Handout 2.12a
There’s a difference between summarizing the main idea of a text and summarizing a text.

Key difference: Cornell Notes ask kids to summarize the notes ≅ summarizing learning ≅ summarizing main idea]

Where is SUMMARIZE in Costa’s Levels of Thinking? Why?
Comparison 😞

Turn and Talk:

Define (without your cell phones/Internet) the word *compare*.

Thoughts???
Getting beyond DOK 1

• Compare/contrast –

• Compare means to analyze similarities and differences between. It does not mean to list similarities and differences. Listing is DOK 1. Discriminating between and similarity and a difference is arguably a DOK 2 for K-2 students ...maybe.

• Furthermore, there should ALWAYS be a “raison d’etre” – in real life, no one goes about comparing/contrasting for no reason!
Compare Goldilocks & Little Red Riding Hood:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Comparison</th>
<th>DOK</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>They are both girls</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goldilocks is blonde and LRRH is brunette</td>
<td>1+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goldilocks doesn’t talk to animals but LRRH does</td>
<td>1+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both are risk-takers</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both are naïve (trusting); not afraid of being alone</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both disobedient: LRRH disobedys mom; G disobeys laws</td>
<td>2+</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The “So what?” piece

With the graphic organizers you already use – add the “so what?” piece.

For example, with the compare/contrast organizer, require students to generalize about patterns they may see. This does not mean, “there are many similarities and differences,” but – rather – something like

“Although there are more (or fewer) similarities than differences, the differences are more (or less) critical to understanding the complex issue of__________________”

Bonnie Albertson, DE Reading & Writing Project
What’s good about this (or similar) GO is that students are forced to **analyze the differences**; they must categorize the features being compared.

**Next steps** – have students look for patterns – make some generalizations about the comparison.
### Similarities
- girls from fairy tales
- meet talking wild animals
- (personality) risk-takers; not afraid of woods or being alone
- similar themes (breaking rules has consequences)

### Differences
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goldilocks</th>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Lil’ Red Riding Hood</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Disobeys society rules and laws</td>
<td><strong>Rules</strong></td>
<td>Disobeys her mother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Runs from wild animals</td>
<td><strong>Relationship to animals</strong></td>
<td>Not afraid to talk to wild animals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frightened but not in danger (did not have to be rescued)</td>
<td><strong>Consequences</strong></td>
<td>In grave danger (had to be rescued)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

So what? What thesis can I support using evidence from my chart?
Consider the following sample theses:

😊 _____G_____ and _____LRRH______ are alike in some ways and different in others.

😊 _____G_____ and _____LRRH______ have more similarities than differences, but the differences prove to be more significant

😊
Thesis:

Both girls have similar personalities: they are risk-takers and disobedient. However, LRRH’s act of disobedience, cutting through the woods and “talking to a stranger,” nearly costs her her life, while Goldilocks – despite being a law-breaker, is never really in danger. A similar trait – disobedience – yields different outcomes.
## Comparison: Max Factor & Revlon Lipstick

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Similarities</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Both offer more than 24 colors</td>
<td>• Both offer shiny and matte finishes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Both contain Vitamin D</td>
<td>• Both contain SPF 30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Differences</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Max Factor</strong></td>
<td>Flavors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offer flavored versions</td>
<td>Does not offer flavors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lasts up to 8 hours</td>
<td>Long-lasting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average cost $6.99</td>
<td>Price</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
So what? Who cares?
Lead them to generate a THESIS -

Although there are more similarities than differences, ......

• If price is no object, Max Factor has more benefits.
• If you can afford the “up front” cost, Max Factor will last longer and give you more options.
• If you are on strict budget, Revlon may be your best option.
Make all writing an argument...

“In a persuasive essay, you can select the most favorable evidence, appeal to emotions, and use style to persuade your readers. Your single purpose is to be convincing. The same might be said of propaganda and advertising.

Argument, on the other hand, is mainly about logical appeals and involves claims, evidence, warrants, backing, and rebuttal. ...Argument is the heart of critical thinking and academic discourse...”

George Hillocks, 2012. Teaching Argument Writing, Heinemann

M. Smith, J. Wilhelm, J. Fredricksen 2011. Oh, Yeah?! Heinemann
Warranting Claims to Data

Stephen Toulmin (1958)

An argument must be grounded. Therefore, a position on an arguable issue must be supported by CLAIMS that are backed by EVIDENCE that is WARRANTED.

So-o-o, what’s a warrant? Warrants CLARIFY the connection(s)/relationship(s) between evidence and claim. Warrants are the underlying assumptions that should be explicit to the reader.
According to the National Center for Educational Statistics, 80% of high school drop outs have failing grades at the time of their withdraw. \((D)\) And since [we can agree that] no one wants to feel like a failure, \((W)\), unless there are mitigating circumstances such as family financial distress or illness \((Q)\), most of the 10% of kids who drop out of high school each year are doing so because of their inability to succeed academically \((C)\).
My favorite thing...  

My cat is very special to me  

He sleeps in bed with me every night  

Everyone wants to feel safe and protected  

Pretty things make me happy? Pretty things are more valuable than ugly things?  

He is very pretty  

Reason  

Warrant (assumption)  

B. Albertson, DRWP 2012
But CCSS doesn’t ask for “warrants” -

True, but they require that students -

• “...clarify the relationships among claim(s), reasons, and evidence. (gr 7)
• W1.c-gr 8 “...clarify the relationships among claim(s), counterclaims, reasons, and evidence. (gr 8)
• W1.c-gr 9-12 “...clarify the relationships between claim(s) and reasons, between reasons and evidence, and between claim(s) and counterclaims. (HS)
“Student friendly” request for warrants:

1) “What makes this evidence support the claim/reason?”
2) “What connects the example to the thesis/position?”
3) “How/why does this data prove or support the claim/reason?”

* When students are unable to warrant their claims to evidence, they “discover” that the evidence really doesn’t “prove” the claim. Often, they are trying to prove one claim with another claim. *
C = Make a Claim (in an argumentative essay, this is the support for the position – the thesis. In a paragraph, this is the thesis). Claims must be arguable.

S = Set up- Introduce the evidence you will use to back up your claim by providing your reader the context for the quote/evidence. This can include definitions as well.

E = Evidence [or Q = Quote] - Choose information (e.g., a quote or paraphrase) that backs up your claim. This is your evidence, your text-based support.

T = Tie-in- Explain how/why your quote supports your claim. “Warrant claims to evidence” (don’t expect your reader to make the connections).

CSQT/CSET makes ALL writing argument

Bill Lewis, UD; adapted B. Albertson based on CCSS
Make a claim about Goldilocks’ character:

• Claim: Goldilocks is a criminal-in-training.
• Set-up: The 3 bears were out walking in the woods one day when Goldilocks, who was also out walking, happened upon their cottage.
• Evidence: When it appeared that no one was home, Goldilocks “peeked around and then just barged in,” stealing the bears’ food and breaking their property.
• Tie-in: Destroying another’s property is illegal. Furthermore, it’s socially and morally unacceptable to invade someone else’s personal space.
• Claim: **Goldilocks is a risk-taker.**
• Set-up: **The 3 bears were out walking in the woods one day when Goldilocks, who was also out walking, happened upon their cottage.**
• Quote: **When it appeared that no one was home, Goldilocks “peeked around and then just barged in the living room,” availing herself of the bears’ cozy amenities.**
• Tie-in: **Going into a stranger’s territory is unsafe as there are too many potentially dangerous unknowns.**
The Smarter Balanced Performance Task: Full writes based

- The PT combines writing to show composing proficiency *and* writing to show learning
- A key instructional concern arises as students move from summary to synthesis . . .
syn·the·sis /ˈsɪn θə sɪs/
noun, plural syn·the·ses /ˈsɪn θəˌsiz/

1. the **combining** of the constituent elements of separate material or abstract entities into a **single or unified entity** (opposed to analysis, the separating of any material or abstract entity into its constituent elements).

2. a **complex whole** formed by combining.

3. *Chemistry*. the forming or building of a more complex substance or compound from elements or simpler compounds.
Simply put...

- When you synthesize information, you don’t just
  - list facts or summarize information
  - compare or analyze information

- When you synthesize information, you must
  - DO something with that information....create some “new” piece of knowledge

The question becomes “What does ‘do something’ and ‘new knowledge’ look like at different ages/stages?”
So how do I TEACH synthesis?

Teach students the following steps to synthesis:

1. **Collect information** from a variety of sources

2. **Determine central idea** and **details** for each “text,” then **summarize** central ideas for each text

3. **Find PATTERN**S between and among different sources: Infer relationships between and among the ideas and details found in different sources of information; show understanding of the complexities/subtleties of those ideas

4. **Select and prioritize** relevant information, based on an understanding on the task and understanding of the patterns detected

5. **INTEGRATE** information to achieve a synthesis task.

Bonnie Albertson, DE Reading & Writing Project
Critical Reading & Note taking

AVID strategies (see, also, AVID 6-12 Content area DBW/Q: document based writing/questions)

• STAR (set-up; take; add to; Review)
• FLIP (assess friendliness of text; language use; interest; prior knowledge)
• Marking the Text
• Writing in the Margins
• Charting the Text

GUIDED RELEASE OF RESPONSIBILITY: MODEL, MODEL, MODEL
Collaborative Practice
Paired Practice
Independent Practice
Benefits of questioning/note-taking

- Study: compared students’ comprehension of reading texts –
  1. one with “guiding questions” provided
  2. one with no active reader guides/reminders
  3. one directing students to generate their own questions as they read
- Results: no difference in assessment results between groups 1 & 2. BUT group 3 did much better than control group.
- Strategy: QTA (Isabel Beck)
  - study* cited by D Buehl
Summary vs Synthesis: Chemistry

• You can summarize hydrogen – describe its essential characteristics and properties

• You can summarize oxygen – describe its essential characteristics and properties

• But creating WATER – H₂O – is synthesis. You are creating something NEW.

Bonnie Albertson, DE Reading & Writing Project
But it’s really not that simple ...

“Synthesis lies on a continuum of evolving thinking.” (Strategies That Work, page 144)
Summary Synthesis

At first ...
• Crafting a main idea statement is an elementary version of synthesizing. It’s an early step.
• Crafting a thesis statement – a generalization about the bigger world or the human condition – is a version of synthesizing.

But then ...
• Students need to “integrate information from a variety of sources” as part of research projects, generating new knowledge about the world.

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Summary

When you investigate a debatable issue, you might report the key evidence presented for each side.

“The issue of whether or not humans should eat meat is a complex one. There are humanitarian and health reasons to support both sides of the debate.”

[recording, listing, describing]

Bonnie Albertson, DE Reading & Writing Project
When you take a stand on a debatable issue — pro or con — you are forced to analyze the merits of the evidence for each side and evaluate the merit of each source to come to some conclusion.

“The issue of whether or not humans should eat meat is a complex one. After analyzing the evidence for both sides of the debate, it is clear that humans would be both healthier and more ethical if they stuck to a vegetarian diet.”

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When you **analyze** an argument, you are able to evaluate the evidence and craft a policy statement that **synthesizes** the information and qualifies a position to account for the myriad of factors that might affect a stance.

“The issue of whether or not humans should eat meat is a complex one. But the debate should not be polarized around eating or not eating meat. The real issue is how we can raise – and slaughter – food animals more humanely and, at the same time, create a society in which organic meats, consumed in healthier portions, can support a well-balanced diet.”

[not “just” picking a side, but creating a new argument]

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Scaffolding the process of synthesis

The following are some graphic representations to show how the process of synthesis can be taught.

Just remember that . . .

• No graphic organizer can substitute for instruction. Handing students a graphic organizer is not teaching them how (and why) the organizer can be used in the service of reading and analyzing for information relevant to an instructional task.

• All instruction should utilize the guided release of responsibility model: I do, we do together, you do with a partner or in a group, you do independently.

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# Key Concept Synthesis

1. Read the text (could separate into chunks)
2. Identify the [5] most important concepts from reading (use key words/phrases)
3. Put the concepts into your own words
4. Explain why those concepts are “key”
5. Write a final statement that captures the main idea

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Concepts</th>
<th>Put the concept in your own words</th>
<th>Explain WHY the concept is important/relevant/ necessary for understanding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Main Idea</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Shannon Bumgarner, http://ohiorc.org/adlit(strategy
Categorizing & Detecting Patterns

Find common words/themes/ideas across the different sources and list them below.

a. ______________________
b. ______________________
c. ______________________
d. ______________________

Understanding these relationships can help you organize your information and/or build your argument.

*Instructional Hint* – Detecting patterns can involve color-coding or using sticky notes, directly on notes pages &/or on graphic organizers.

Detecting patterns is key to generating new knowledge - synthesis
Some tips for integrating information from multiple sources . . .

Rearrange the information from your notes pages **not by source** but **by common themes/ideas/subtopics**.

These will become the different sections/paragraphs of your paper/research project.

Decide what should come first, second, etc.
Integrating the information

Once you have decided what information is relevant to the task and you’ve determined the patterns, there are three ways to integrate that information into a research paper – summarizing, paraphrasing and quoting:

• SUMMARY – Using your own words, write a brief objective account of the main ideas from a source.
• PARAPHRASE – Using your own words, restate the ideas from a source.
• QUOTE – Use the exact words from a source.

Writers generally use a combination of all 3 ways. All 3 require proper citation.

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The final step - Synthesis

Think about the following questions:

• What new knowledge have you generated?

• What generalization can you make as a result of the research?

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