Rescuing Our Reluctant Writers
Strategies for Secondary Students

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The many labels of Executive Function Disorder

Students with executive function challenges are often labeled:

- **Lazy**
- **Disorganized**
- **Hyperactive**
- **Learning disabled**
- **Autistic**
- **Behavior problems**
Why is the writing process so hard for our reluctant writers?

Let’s look at a few of the skills needed for writing:
Now let’s look at a few of the skills that are hard for kids with Executive Function Differences like Learning Disabilities, ADD, ADHD, ASD, and more:

- Fine Motor
- Language
- Problem Solving
- Sensory and Emotional Regulation
- Organization
- Working Memory
- Imitation
- Auditory Processing
- Visual Memory
- Gross Motor
- Proprioception (body in space)
Writing skill: ability to remember how to form letters

“What do you mean you don’t remember how to make a ‘W’?

The brains of individuals with ASD have fewer neural connections between the cortex (new information) and the cerebellum (automatic, long term memory).

Stewart H. Mostofsky, Stephanie K. Powell, Daniel J. Simmonds, Melissa C. Goldberg, Brian Caffo, James J. Pekar, Johns Hopkins School of Medicine, 2009
Skills that students with Executive Functioning challenges have difficulty performing and which are also needed for successful writing.

Sound Familiar?

- Language
- Fine Motor
- Problem Solving
- Organization
- Working Memory
- Auditory Processing
- Imitation
- Visual Memory
- Gross Motor
- Proprioception (body in space)
- Sensory and Emotional Regulation
Brain Research and writing: it’s all about connections
Writing skill: ability to imitate motor movements. “Make your letters like this.”

The brains of individuals with ASD show differences in the mirror neurons of the parietal lobe. These are often referred to as the ‘monkey see / monkey do’ neurons – controlling a person’s ability to imitate motor movements.

Manzar Ashtari, Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia, J. Lindner Center for Autism, North Shore Long Island Jewish Health System in Bethpage, NY, 2007
Sensory Motor Regions Become Over Connected

4/15 Journal *Biological Psychiatry*, “Cognitive neuroscientists at San Diego State University found that in children and adolescents with autism spectrum disorder, the connections between the cerebral cortex and the cerebellum appear to be overdeveloped in sensorimotor regions of the brain.”

“The imaging results revealed that the participants with autism had far stronger neuronal connectivity between sensorimotor regions of the cerebellum and cerebral cortex than did their counterparts without autism. Conversely, the participants with autism had less connectivity between regions involved in higher-order cognitive functions such as decision-making, attention and language.”

Writing skill: ability to organize letters into words, words into sentences, sentences into paragraphs, etc. “This doesn’t make sense!”

The brains of individuals with ASD have more white matter, but far fewer connections between sections of the brain, i.e., less organization.

Dr. Martha Herbert, Harvard Medical School, Pediatric Neurologist at Massachusetts General Hospital, TRANSCEND Research Program
Writing skill: ability to process language “Why didn’t you write down my directions for the assignment?”

• The brains of individuals with high functioning ASD have more activation in Wernicke’s area and less activation in Broca’s area – the two primary language areas of the brain, resulting in poor information integration, even in those with strong language skills.

“BUT……as a teacher, I’m required to help students meet academic standards in writing – whether they have a label or not. HELP!!!?”
Research: Writing can increase achievement in all areas:

1. Writing about material that has been read increases comprehension.
2. Teaching students how to write increases reading comprehension, fluency, and word reading.
3. Increasing amount of student writing increases reading comprehension.

“Writing to Read”, Graham and Hebert, Harvard Educational Review, 2010
Writing challenges can be grouped into four main categories:

• Language
• Organization
• Sensory
• Motor

As teachers, we can help!
GETTING STARTED

Teacher Concern: “When I give him a writing assignment, he just sits there. Even when it’s an easy task, well within his ability, he seems to freeze.”

National Common Core Standard for Writing: Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of tasks, purposes, and audiences.
Getting started…

why it happens, and what a teacher can do to help

Consider the four main areas of difficulty:

• Language
• Organization
• Sensory
• Motor
‘Getting started’... might be due to sensory issues.

There is a strong link between the vestibular system and the language areas of the brain. To help a student with autism activate his language system and break the cycle of inertia, we need to help him

WAKE UP HIS SYSTEM.

• Try this...
Getting started – Wake Up Exercises

Before writing:
Have the student ‘quickly!’ deliver a message to a teacher down the hall.

Provide a daily school job before writing: help in cafeteria, erase the board, pass out books.

Move!
‘Getting started’... might be due to difficulty with motor planning.

“Even when I am highly motivated, and know what to do and how, I still don't do it. Instead, I sit and think about it or plan exactly what I am going to do in minute detail. I am stuck in inertia.”

Scientifically, inertia appears to be a function of the neurological processes that control a person’s ability to shift attention and plan voluntary motor movements. When a person has difficult in these two areas, the result is often a tendency to stay still.

• Try this...
GETTING STARTED – Motor planning

For younger student, provide hand over hand support for the first written word of the assignment. With each letter of the word, keep your hand in place, but slowly fade the pressure of your hand on the student’s hand. When you feel that the student has begun to write, slowly fade the presence of your hand. Often, this minimal physical prompt will be enough to break the cycle of inertia and allow the student to proceed with the assignment on his own.
‘Getting started’…might be due to difficulty with language.

Many of our students, even those with very high abilities, have trouble understanding abstract concepts. They have difficulty with instructions such as, “Take out your journal and write about anything you are interested in,” or “Write about your favorite season.” In order to understand what you want them to write about, they need for the instructions to be very concrete.

Try this:
Assignment: Write about someone who made a significant impact on scientific thought.

Galileo  DaVinci  Einstein  Newton

1. ___________ made a very significant impact on scientific thought.

2. ___________ changed the way people thought about ____________________________________________________________________.

3. Previously, people had thought ____________________________________________________________________.

4. But this scientist had a different idea. It was ____________________________________________________________________.

Write at least 5 paragraphs about this scientist on a separate sheet of paper. Use these sentences for your first paragraph.
‘Getting started’…might be due to difficulty with organization.

A simple graphic organizer can be a powerful tool to engage the student by visually guiding him through the writing process, helping him break out of the ‘inertia’ pattern.

Try this:
• SOLO is a literacy suite of the most popular assistive technology
• Including a text reader, graphic organizer, talking word processor, and word prediction.
Getting started – try technology

**SOLO Software: Draft Builder**

Graphic organizer, built on brainmapping. Brainstorm ideas, then organize them.
REFUSING TO WRITE

Teacher Concern: “When it’s time to write, he won’t even try!

National Common Core Standard for Writing: Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of tasks, purposes, and audiences.
Refusing to write…

why it happens, and what a teacher can do to help

Consider the four main areas of difficulty:
• Language
• Organization
• Sensory
• Motor

MAKE SURE YOU HAVE SET THE STUDENT UP FOR SUCCESS!!
Refusing to write’ … might be due to difficulty with sensory motor issues

All of our senses are involved in the writing process, but three sensory systems are crucial for writing – tactile (touch), vestibular (balance), and proprioceptive (awareness of body’s position in space).
Sensory Processing

- **Central Nervous System**
  - Smell
  - Vision
  - Hearing
  - Taste
  - Touch (Tactile)
  - Movement (Vestibular)
  - Body Awareness (Proprioception)

- **Balance**
  - Awareness of two sides of body
  - Motor Planning

- **Body Scheme**
  - Reflex Maturity
  - Ability to screen input

- **Eye-Hand Coordination**
  - Precise control of eye movements
  - Postural Adjustment

- **Language**
  - Visual Spatial Relationship
  - Attention

- **Daily Living Skills**
  - Behaviour

- **Academic Learning**
A writing experiment for teachers

1. Hold your pencil in your non dominant hand.
2. Write two sentences about what you did last night.
3. Reactions?
Tactile/Touch

- Our first sensory system to function
- We are first nourished, calmed and become attached to others through our sense of touch
- Tactile receptors are found throughout the skin
- Protective-fright/flight response
- Discriminative-quality
Proprioception

- Housed along muscle fibers and tendons that connect muscle to bone
- Gives us our awareness of body position/body in space
- Automatic adjustments of body position
- Postural stability
Signs of Poor Proprioception

- Stiff and poor coordination
- Clumsy
- Frequent falls
- Runs into furniture, walls, people, etc.
- Falls out of chair
- Easily frustrated
- Easily fatigued

- Squirms, especially when seated
- Slow to established handedness
- Often breaks pencil and / or pencil lead
- Difficulty with stairs
- Foot slap when walking
- Toe Walking
Vestibular

- Receptors within the inner ear
- Affects our gravitational security
- Coordinates the movement of eyes/visual spatial head and body position
- Maintains muscle tone
- Enables us to hold our head up against gravity
- Has an effect on being able to print and write
- Strong relationship with auditory system/language
1. Start with big muscle movement: Jobs around school: push trash can, wipe tables, return library books
2. Identify a pacing area in the back of the room
3. We all have a favorite pen, help the student find theirs
4. To reduce postural fatigue, allow flexible seating: Standing desk, beanbag chair, floor
REFUSING TO WRITE - Sensory

Change the writing environment

• Establish a ‘private office’ area within the classroom where the student can write with reduced distractions

Give the student a clipboard and have him start his writing assignment while sitting in a beanbag chair.
Why Do We Write

Does the student understand why we write? Why someone needs to be able to read it?

- To persuade/request
- To make change
- To invite (party)
- To thank
- To persuade or convince
- To show others what you know
What did I do to earn a time-out?

Not write (because it's my least favorite thing to do EVER)
Refusing to Write - might be due to difficulty with language and imaginative thought.

Set your student up for success by giving him visual choices

Show the student 3 topic related pictures. Ask him to verbally tell you about each picture and how it relates to the assignment. Reinforce and expand on his ideas. THEN ask him to write.
Refusing to write – might be due to organization
Try technology

iPad app: popplet (lite version is free, full version about $5)

Graphic organizer / mind mapper. Info can be typed or written with finger. Easy to move ideas around.
GETTING STUCK

Teacher Concern: “He gets stuck on an idea when he is writing. He likes to write about the same thing over and over. Sometimes he gets stuck on one little detail and can’t make himself move on.”

National Common Core Standard for Writing: Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of tasks, purposes, and audiences.
Getting stuck...

why it happens, and what a teacher can do to help

Consider the four main areas of difficulty:

• Language
• Organization
• Sensory
• Motor
‘Getting stuck’…might be due to difficulty with language

- **Language / Concrete thinking:** Many of our reluctant writers are very concrete in their thinking. Imagination and creative thought are areas of weakness. This difficulty with imagination makes it hard to come up with new ideas.

- **Try this...**
GETTING ‘STUCK’ - Language

Provide a visual support to spark imagination.

Directions: Use the numbers on the picture to help you think of ideas for your report.

1. Photosynthesis
2. Energy
3. Water
4. Chlorophyll
5. Oxygen is released
6. Glucose is formed

Carbon Dioxide
“Getting stuck”... might be due to difficulty with organization.

- Organization / Perseverative thought: Perseveration, or the tendency to repeat an idea or action over and over, is one of the common traits of students with executive functioning differences. In the writing process, this tendency makes it a challenge to transition from one idea or sentence to the next.

- Try this:
GETTING STUCK – Organization

Provide a ‘Sloppy Copy’ with transition words to help students transition from one idea to the next.

In the beginning________________________________________________________

________________________________________________First_______________________

__________________Second________________________________________________

__________________Next____________________________________________________

Finally______________________________________________________________

In Conclusion__________________________________________________________
“Getting stuck”...might be due to difficulty with sensory issues.

• Sensory / Perfectionism: Some of our reluctant writers are perfectionists. They may spend lots of time erasing or correcting work that isn’t perfect to their way of thinking. They often becomes anxious or angry if their work doesn’t look right to them.

• Try this:
Getting stuck - Sensory

Before writing sensory motor exercises

1. Deep Breathe in slowly through my nose, then blow out through my lips. Repeat 5 times. (Mindfulness activities)


3. Open and close fingers 10 times.
‘Getting stuck’…might be due to difficulty with motor skills.

- Gross and fine motor skills: Holding a pencil can actually be painful for a person with sensory sensitivity. When that discomfort is added to the challenge of coordinating all the muscle groups needed to write, students often give up or melt down.

- Try this...
“Getting Stuck” might be due to challenges with Motor Skills

- A pencil grip may help. Try practicing for short periods in order for the student to “give it a try” and avoid frustration
- Try taking turns with the physical component of writing, you write a sentence and then he writes a sentence or share the typing
- Dictation/ After dictation the student copies or types what he has dictated to you
- Technology
Use Technology

- Reduce the motor requirement of writing by using a word prediction program. The student types the first three letters of a word, then selects the correct word from a drop-down menu. The computer reads the word out loud, so the student can hear what he has written. The student only needs to make a few keystrokes to produce the word he wants, thus enabling faster task completion, less frustration, and better sentences.
SnapType

SnapType App
For Occupational Therapy

- Take pictures of worksheets
- Tap to add text

Available on the App Store

Correlative Conjunctions Worksheet (Part 1 / 1.3.1e)

Directions: Read each sentence below. Fill in each sentence with the correct correlative conjunctions.

Example: The ______ wants to play ______ not.
Answer: She either wants to play or not.

1. ______ or ______. We ______ are going to the park ______ are going home.
   (either / or, neither / nor)

2. ______ or ______. Neither ______ Nor ______ expressed their thoughts.
   (either / or, neither / nor)

3. ______ or ______. Neither ______ nor ______ the couple ______ Sharon told the truth.
   (either / or, neither / nor)

4. ______ or ______. Neither ______ nor ______ the cats ______ the dogs woke us up.
   (either / or, neither / nor)

5. ______ or ______. John will ______ start today ______ start tomorrow.
   (either / or, neither / nor)
Read & Write Gold

- Read & Write literacy
- Word prediction
- Text to speech (will read on line)
- Speech to text
- Vocabulary builder
- Reading practice
- Ipad version is free

https://rw.texthelp.com/drive/Support/Home
IPAD Ginger Keyboard App

- Ginger Keyboard
- Word prediction
- Ability to proofread for spelling based on context.
- Corrects misspellings that standard writing apps and autocorrect easily miss, such as homonyms.
- It can also help a user improve a piece of writing with its rephrasing, synonym, and grammar-checking tools.
- 3.99
Dragon Dictate 4

• PV and Ipad
• Dragon approved for speech to text for standardized testing accommodation/google
• You can dictate into almost any application, but Dragon Dictate works best when you dictate into its own Note Pad; it also works very well with Microsoft Word or Pages ‘09.
Getting Stuck while Notetaking—try technology

iPad app: Smart Writing Tool - 7 Notes HD (about $8)

Convert your handwriting into text. Includes a good word prediction
Getting stuck / Writing down assignments– try technology

iPad app:   myHomework (free)

Very simple organization system for homework. Customize to a student’s schedule, type assignments. Homework shows in two formats: list and calendar.
MISUNDERSTANDING THE DIRECTIONS

Teacher Concern: “He seems to be listening, but sometimes he completely misunderstands the assignment.”

National Common Core Standard for Writing: Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.
Misunderstanding the directions might be due to difficulty with language.

Students with Executive Functioning differences often have trouble processing language. Temple Grandin tells us that “...after about three sentences, your voice goes into ‘blah blah blah’, and I just tune you out!”

And talking louder just makes it worse!

• Try this...
Why is that important?

Lots of words just turn into gibberish:
Temple Grandin: “After three sentences, I just tune you out!”

False confessions: the Yes / No problem

Think about how we teach children…
"Do you understand?"

The teacher means: Do you understand what I just presented?
The student with ASD hears: Are you paying attention?
More effective: Tell me what I said, using your own words.

"This is important."

The teacher means: This will probably be on the test.
The student with ASD hears: This is important to my teacher, but not necessarily to me.
More effective: Write this down. It will be on the test.

"Are there any questions?"

The teacher means: Tell me what you do not understand.
The student with ASD hears: The teacher is finished talking.
More effective: Tell me what I said, using your own words.
‘Misunderstanding the directions’ might be due to sensory issues.

It is more difficult for students with language processing challenges to process language when they are in a large group setting. The student may go into survival mode as he works to filter out the sensory stimuli in the room. He may not be fully ‘tuned in’ to the teacher’s voice, and may then miss important parts of the instructions.

• Try this...
MISUNDERSTANDING THE DIRECTIONS - Sensory

‘Preferential Seating’ is not enough!!
Make sure you have the student’s attention **BEFORE** you give the directions.

• Personalize Instructions: Say his name, tap desk,
• Evidenced based practice: VISUALS  Provide written directions on the screen, overhead, Smartboard: clearly written (universal design) (pictures)
KNOWING WHAT TO WRITE

Teacher Concern: “He has good ideas, but when it is time to write he can’t think of anything to say.”

National Common Core Academic Standards for Writing:
Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, descriptive details, and clear event sequences.
Difficulty **knowing what to write**...

**why it happens, and what a teacher can do to help**

Consider the four main areas of difficulty:

- Language
- Organization
- Sensory
- Motor
Difficulty **knowing what to write** might be due to difficulty with organization.

Sequential thought is often a big challenge for many of our reluctant writers. Just as they have difficulty organizing their supplies, they also have trouble organizing thoughts into logical sequence and order.

• **Try this...**
Provide a Framework: Make a Timeline

Assignment: Write a report on Martin Luther King.

The student tells the teacher what he knows about the subject. For each fact that the student relates, the teacher writes a keyword on the timeline. When the student has related enough items for a sequential report, the teacher numbers the keywords. Then, in paragraph form, the student writes a sentence for each keyword.
When You Get Them Moving Learning Increases!!

Aerobic exercise at target heart rate:
• Improves concentration
• Improves impulse control
• Improves attention
• Increases Motivation
• Helps Mood and Anxiety Regulation
• Combats depression/Increase self esteem
• Reverses learned helplessness
• Combats toxic effects of stress hormones
• Decreases fatigue
Dr. John Ratey Associate Clinical Professor of Psychiatry at Harvard Medical School

• “Exercise is like taking a little bit of Prozac and a little bit of Ritalin because, like the drugs, exercise elevates these neurotransmitters.”

• “When you exercise, at the cellular level the brain is drenched with serotonin, glutamate, norepinephrine, dopamine and growth hormones, all wielding a powerful influence, like Miracle-Gro for the brain,”.
Exercise Greatly Impacts Learning

- Prefrontal Cortex: Major Role In Executive Functioning
- The CEO
- Planning
- Organizing
- Learning from mistakes
- Maintaining focus
- Working Memory
- Initiating or delay response
The Research is Impressive: British Journal of Sports Med

• 19 studies of 586 kids, teens, and young adults found short 10 to 40 minute bursts of exercise led to an immediate boost in concentration and mental focus, improving blood flow to the brain.

• Further evidence: 20 min before taking a test.
20 Minute Walk

• On the left: Brain before a 20 minute walk
• On the right: Brain after a 20 minute walk
Exercise and Learning

• Walking 20 min. on a treadmill or just walking scored 15% better with an improved ability to take test

• Behavior-in first four months—all kids are moving 45 min a day- discipline plunged 63% and 85% dropped in another district

• Attention all improved

• Aggression decreased

• Move to Learn videos

www.movetolearnms.org
Exercise and Learning

- 10-15 steps to get blood and oxygen to the brain
- Boot Camp
- Balance boards
- Brain Breaks
- Walks
- Integrate Movement within the Academics
- 1-2-3
WRITING ILLEGIBLY

Teacher Concern: “His writing is horrible! I can’t read it. The words are large, and they all run together. It’s just not legible.”

National Common Core Academic Standards for Writing:
Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.
“Writing Illegibly”
Why it may be difficult and what a teacher can do to help

Consider all the sensory motor requirements of writing:

Sensory processing, neuromuscular: muscle tone, strength, postural control, motor skills involving being able to cross the midline, bilateral integration and motor planning, poor fine motor coordination, poor visual perception as well as cognitive components.

No wonder writing is often illegible!
“Writing Illegibly”
May be due to poor visual motor skills

• Mayer and Calhoun (2003) found that graphomotor problems were significantly higher for students with an ASD regardless of age or IQ and that this had a serious impact on their written expression.

• Myles and colleagues (2003) compared the written expression of 16 students with Asperger syndrome with students without disabilities. They found that those with an ASD demonstrated a decrease in legibility, complexity and number of words used during handwriting tasks.

Try This:
Writing Illegibly: Positioning
“Writing Legibly” Visual motor

• If the student is printing too small then your student may be holding his pencil very close to the tip of the pencil. A small visual/tactile cue may help. Wrap a small rubber band or piece of masking tape on the end of the yellow of the pencil to help to see where his fingers and thumb should be.

• When writing is too large your student may be using “big muscles” to form letters instead of smaller muscles intended for writing: Look at positioning
Writing Legibly Visual Perception

• Visual perception is a cognitive skill: not a learned skill

• Brain’s ability to interpret, analyze and give meaning to what is seen

• If perception is incorrect it effects writing, reading, math, comprehension, social and more

• Some Individuals with autism may experience severe perceptual problems. Stress from lighting, colors, patterns and contrast bombard the system

• 80% of what is learned is visual
“Writing Legibly” Visual Perceptual Strategies to support writing

• Reduce fluorescent lighting
• Highlight or darken lines
• Turn ruled paper horizontal for main
• Graph paper
• Use of an index card or blank paper to cover extra line
• Three ring binder
Writing Illegibly: Support

• Color overlays (little research but enough reported positive to consider) perceptually blurred, doubling of words, shadows

• Green dot line down the left side of paper

• Red dot or line down right side of the paper
“Writing Illegibly”: Letter size and placement

Give visual cues to assist: provide yellow lines or boxes the size of the words and letters. He forms the words on the yellow line or box.
This year for
Christmas I had
got a truck. My
brother Jacob got
a car. My
brother Joseph got
an airplane. My
sister...
Writing Illegibly: Crossing Midline
Writing is Better With Two Hands

- If the student is not stabilizing his paper
- Struggling with reversing letters/numbers
- Switching handedness when younger/hand dominance
- Visual spatial (writing near line, lining up math did not transfer to automatic brain hemisphere)
- Difficulty visually tracking across midline
- Difficulty coordinating gross motor patterns
- Difficulty with reading, writing, drawing, cutting
- Difficulty with self help skills
Writing Illegibly: Bilateral Skills
Hold the paper against a wall while writing for short periods.
Writing Illegibly: Time for Technology

- Reduce frustration
- Provide keyboarding instruction
- Computer, Ipad, tab...
Handwriting vs keyboarding

“Our current research shows value in combining writing by pen and computers in implementing evidence-based writing instruction for letter production, spelling, and composing.”

Dr. Virginia Berninger, University of Washington, 2014
“What’s Lost as Handwriting Fades”

USE BOTH
Handwriting research – **writing by hand engages the brain in learning**

Muller and Openheimer 2015 – Comparison between college students taking notes with laptop vs taking notes in longhand.

1. With laptop: more words written; copied lecture verbatim
2. With longhand: less words; summarized key points

Students much better at synthesizing information, engaging in critical thinking, and making judgements about what they had heard when handwriting
WRITING AND EDITING

Teacher Concern: “When I ask him to edit and revise his work, he just looks at it, but he doesn’t make any changes.”

National Common Core Academic Standards for Writing:
With guidance and support from adults and peers, focus on a topic and strengthen writing as needed by revising and editing.
Reluctant writers are often ‘one track thinkers’. Their brains tend to focus intensely on one thing at a time. When we ask a student to edit his work, we are asking him to consider MANY things – content as well as structure. Students will be much more successful if we give them a scaffold.

Try this:
### Writing and Editing – Organization

**Fold the paper so only one number shows at a time.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Check for capital letters.</th>
<th>I did it</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>• First words in sentences</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Proper nouns – people, places, dates, etc.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Check for punctuation (., ?, !, , “)</th>
<th>I did it</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>• At the ends of sentences</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• After abbreviations like Mr. and Dr.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Check for spelling.</th>
<th>I did it</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>• If you aren’t sure, check the dictionary or Word Wall</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Check for grammar.</th>
<th>I did it</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>• Make sure you didn’t leave out little words like ‘a’, ‘an’, ‘the’, ‘as’, ‘but’.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Check to make sure your writing makes sense.</th>
<th>I did it</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>• Touch each word as you read it. Does it make sense?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>My teacher also wants me to check</th>
<th>I did it</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Teacher Concern: “His sentences are so brief! He doesn’t develop his ideas.”

National Common Core Academic Standards for Writing:

- Develop the topic with relevant, well-chosen facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples.
‘Writing the bare minimum might be due to challenges with organization.

All students, especially those with executive function differences, will do much better both behaviorally and with written output if they know EXACTLY what the teacher wants them to do. Provide the student with a visual support that lists: **What do I do, how much do I do, and what do I do when I am finished.** Be very precise.

- **Try this...**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>WHAT DO I DO?</strong></th>
<th><strong>• Write a paragraph about littering.</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **HOW MUCH DO I HAVE TO DO?** | **• Write 6 sentences.**  
  **• Use capitals and punctuation.**  
  **• Each sentence must have at least one adjective.** |
| **WHAT DO I DO WHEN I AM FINISHED?** | **• Give finished paragraph to teacher.**  
  **• Then you can read a pleasure book.** |
“Writing the bare minimum” might be due to sensory challenges

• If a student is challenged with sensory regulation it will be very difficult for the student to focus and produce their personal best work
• Play detective what does his behavior tell you?
  • Does he appear tired, lethargic?
  • Or is he having difficulty calming his mind and body?
• Try this
If your student is writing the bare minimum he might actually need to wake up his sensory system.

- For the tired friend rev up his system with a wake up walk
- Follow with a big muscle push, pull, lift or carry job
- Chewing gum is great / chew on a straw

- Fidget object
To help your student regulate his sensory system:

- Position in a deep bean bag chair or lying on his stomach.
- Try turning his chair around and letting him straddle his legs on each side with the chair back providing calming pressure.

- Remember a reinforcer (Evidenced Based Practice for ASD)!
Teacher Concern: “There is no ‘flow’ to his paragraphs. They either look like one long, run-on sentence, or they look like a laundry list of facts.”

National Common Core Academic Standards for Writing: 
Use linking words and phrases (e.g., because, therefore, since, for example) to connect opinion and reasons or to connect ideas within categories of information (e.g., also, another, and, more, but)
“Organizing a Paragraph or a Report”

Why it is difficult and what a teacher can do to help

• Students with executive function challenges often have difficulty with organization at all levels.

• The act of writing requires organization at many levels even before the student begins to attack the assignment of writing a paragraph.

• First he must organize the tools needed for writing. Next he must organize his ideas into a cohesive thought. Then he must organize sounds into words, and words into sentences.
“Organizing a paragraph” might be due to language / organization needs

Break the task into two parts:

1. **Content**: First, give the student several blank strips of paper. Have him write one complete sentence about the topic on each strip.

   **THEN**

2. **Organization**: Help him number the strips, putting them into a logical order.
"Organizing a paragraph" might be more challenged due to motor needs

• Give him a job (move/work/stretch)

• Think about what you are trying to teach the student. If your goal is to teach organizing sentences into paragraphs, you may need to reduce the motor demands.

• Technology support plus use of a graphic organizer opened in DocHub
“Organizing a paragraph” may be more challenging due to sensory needs

- **SET THE STUDENT UP FOR SUCCESS:**

  - Set up an area that can be used as a quiet ‘office’ space for the student. A writing desk placed against a blank wall, away from commotion

  - Headphones or earplugs may be offered to reduce auditory stimuli.

  - Use natural lighting/table lamps

  - Consider adapting the paper/ color coding
Teacher Concern: “He is really interested in his topic, but he just won’t write the paper”

National Core Academic Standards for Writing – Science / Technical: Conduct short research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question), drawing on several sources and generating additional related, focused questions that allow for multiple avenues of exploration.
Writing A Research Paper
Sensory Provides the Foundation

- Noisy chair legs on floor surface: split tennis balls on the bottom of chair legs
- Odors: consider seating in area or need to be out of the area for writing lab report
- Lighting: uncomfortable/ painful: avoid fluorescent lighting
- Close proximity to others may be too much: Respect need for personal space, report writing may benefit from a resource room setting
WRITING A RESEARCH PAPER – Language and Organization

1. Break the writing requirements of the research paper down into distinct chunks, with each requirement on a separate paper.

2. Give the student **one page** with **one requirement** AND **A DUE DATE FOR THAT PAGE AT THE BOTTOM**

3. When the student turns in that page, give him the next page, with **A DUE DATE FOR THAT PAGE AT THE BOTTOM**

Adding simple pictures as visual cues will help many students understand the directions more easily. HOWEVER, be sensitive to the age and social expectations of the student. Don’t make the student’s assignment look very different from peers’.

Here is a sample template:
Choose a Topic

List three topics that are interesting to you.

1. ____________________________________________
2. ____________________________________________
3. ____________________________________________

I think ________________ is the most interesting of these topics.

I can find the most information about this topic: ________________.

My research paper will be about this topic: ________________.

This page is due on: ________________________________
1. Write a sentence that tells something interesting about your topic:

_____________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________

2. Write a sentence that tells why your topic is important:

_____________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________

3. Write a sentence that tells how you feel about your topic and why other people should feel the same way.

_____________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________

This page is due on: _____________________________
RESEARCH PAPER

Research sources – Must include at least 3 internet sites and 2 books.

Internet sites:
1. _________________________________________________
2. _________________________________________________
3. _________________________________________________

Books:
1. Title:_______________________ Author: ___________ Date:____
2. Title: _______________________ Author: ___________ Date:___
RESEARCH PAPER

Research – History of your topic

Write at least 4 sentences about the history of your topic.

1. ___________________________________________________
   Source: ___________________________________

2. ___________________________________________________
   Source: ___________________________________

3. ___________________________________________________
   Source: ___________________________________

4. ___________________________________________________
   Source: ___________________________________

This page is due on: ________________________________
RESEARCH PAPER
Research – Write at least 4 Interesting Facts or Details about the topic.

1. ________________________________________________________________________
   Source: ___________________________________________________________________

2. ________________________________________________________________________
   Source: ___________________________________________________________________

3. ________________________________________________________________________
   Source: ___________________________________________________________________

4. ________________________________________________________________________
   Source: ___________________________________________________________________

This page is due on: _________________________________________________________
Support your Thesis Statement

Copy your Thesis Statement from Page 2. (You can get it from your teacher)

___________________________________________________

Write three reasons why people should agree with your Thesis Statement. Use your research to support your ideas.

1. __________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________

2. __________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________

3. __________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________

This page is due on: ___________________________________
In summary, (write thesis statement here) ________________________

_______________________________________________________________________

History has shown that (write one sentence about what your history research told you)______________________________________________

_______________________________________________________________________

Additional research shows that (write one detail that supports your thesis statement) ______________________________________________

_______________________________________________________________________

In conclusion, _________________________________________________

_______________________________________________________________________
If it’s not working, ask yourself:

- **Setting (sensory):** Is the room noisy? Is there clutter in his workspace?

- **Seating (motor):** Is he uncomfortable? Does he need a different place to write?

- **Task (organization):** Is the task too big? Do you need to break it down into smaller chunks?
If it’s not working, continued:

• **Timing (organization)**: Is the wait time too long between directive / writing / reinforcement?

• **Directions (language)**: Was there too much talking? Does he need a prompt?

• **Attention (sensory)**: Did you get his attention before giving the task?