

# SWIM

## PROJECT BRIEF

### #4

## KEY POINTS

- > The SWIM evaluation included multiple data sources to measure the impact of the project on students, teachers, and other stakeholders.
- > Evaluation results show positive stakeholder perceptions of SWIM, with more than 90% of participating teachers agreeing that the SWIM model helped provide high quality, specially designed instruction for their students.
- > The evaluation results show that teachers can implement the SWIM instructional sequence with fidelity.
- > According to the SWIM coach, 64% of teacher participants showed a high degree of change in their instructional practices.
- > SWIM data show that between 16 and 22% of students demonstrated growth of at least one writing level over the course of the school year.



# Effectiveness of the Shared Writing Instructional Model

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## The SWIM Approach

Writing is a necessary component of literacy instruction which supports reading comprehension and learning across the curriculum. Writing not only supports increased communication skills, but also promotes socialization, independence, and greater inclusion for students with disabilities (see SWIM Brief #1 for more details about the importance of writing instruction for students with intellectual disabilities). Whether students are writing at pre-emergent, emergent, and transitional levels, all students can learn to write (see SWIM Brief #3 for more details about the different writing levels).

The SWIM approach to teach all students to write includes using research-based learning maps to identify individual instructional goals for students at any level. This approach is supported by the SWIM Cycle, SWIM learning map planning tool, and a five-step writing routine (see SWIM Brief #2 for more details on the SWIM model). SWIM measures student progress across writing levels (emergent, transitional, conventional) in each of three clusters (information gathering, informative and explanatory writing, and opinion writing).

SWIM combines self-regulated strategy development (SRSD) and evidence-based teaching practices, including modeling and prompting for self-monitoring<sup>1</sup>, setting clear and specific goals<sup>2</sup>, setting high but attainable expectations<sup>3</sup>, and explicit instruction<sup>4</sup>. SRSD practices use modeling and discussion to support student creation of a written product for a particular audience<sup>5</sup>. SWIM's evidence base for SRSD stems from more than 100 studies including Grades 2 through 12, with meta-analyses showing significantly higher effect sizes on learning to write than other instructional approaches<sup>6</sup>. The evidence-based writing instruction for general education SRSD includes scaffolded and explicit learning, learning strategies for both genre-specific and general writing, vocabulary, and behaviors like goal setting and self-assessment<sup>7</sup>.

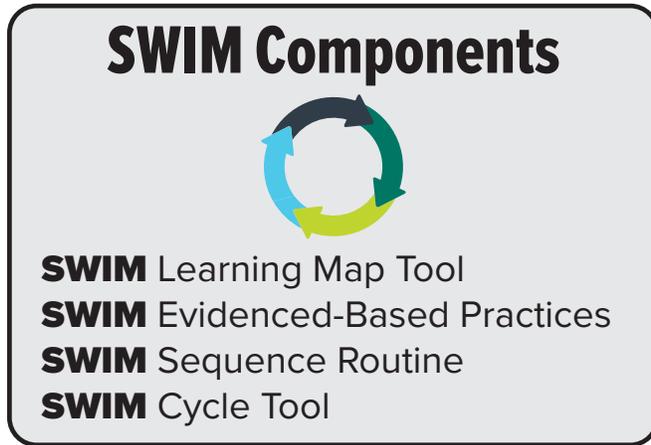
The SWIM logic model describes how the project is intended to lead to its intended outcomes. A simplified view of selected elements from the logic model is shown in a graphic on the next page.

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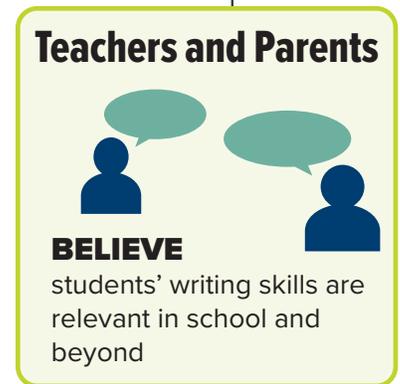
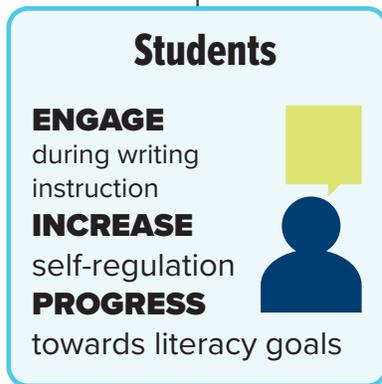
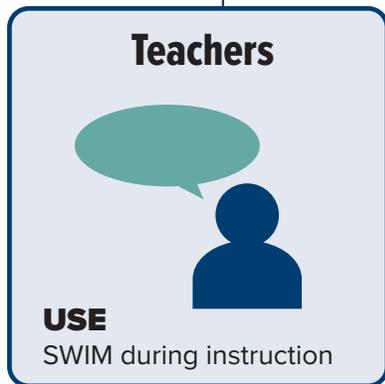
Kobrin, J, Adkins, D, Thatcher, E., Swinburne Romine, R. (2023). *Effectiveness of the Shared Writing Instructional Model* (SWIM Project Brief #4). University of Kansas, Accessible Teaching, Learning, and Assessment Systems.

# Selected Elements of the SWIM Logic Model

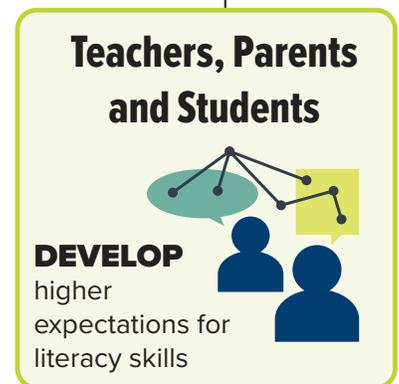
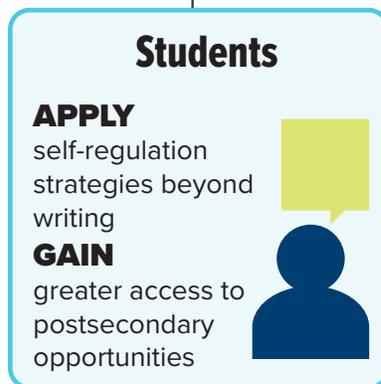
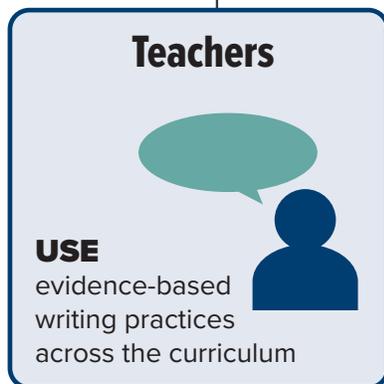
## Teachers use the SWIM Cycle



**Which leads to...**



**And results in...**



## Evaluation Methods

The SWIM evaluation was designed to collect evidence of stakeholder (teacher, administrator, parent) acceptance of SWIM, teachers' fidelity implementing SWIM instruction, teacher change in instructional practice, and student outcomes (writing skills, engagement, and self-regulation). The SWIM evaluation included multiple data sources, including teacher surveys and focus groups, administrator interviews, parent surveys, ratings of teachers' videotaped lessons, documentation from the SWIM coach, and student writing samples, among several others (see final evaluation report for a description of all data sources and measures).

## Participants

Across the second and third project years, participants included 39 teachers (with five teachers from one school district continuing with the project from the first year) and 119 students from K-8 who were eligible for special education services in Iowa. Participating teachers had a range of years teaching students with intellectual disabilities (from less than five years to more than 20 years) and the majority taught in self-contained classrooms with some integration in non-academic subjects.

## Results

### Stakeholder reactions to SWIM

In both project years, teacher survey responses indicated high acceptance of SWIM. Approximately 90% of teachers in both project years agreed that they would recommend the SWIM Model to other teachers and felt the total time to implement the SWIM instructional sequence was manageable. More than 90% felt the SWIM Model components easily fit in with their current practice and that the SWIM five-step routine was feasible to implement in their classrooms.

On the parent survey, nearly all responding parents (91%) indicated they were either satisfied or very satisfied with the progress their child made in writing. Parent survey comments reflected a positive response to SWIM. One parent expressed interest in continued implementation of the program and inquired about parent training. Another parent commented, "Now my child can read and write understandable sentences."

During interviews, administrators positively appraised SWIM and their teachers' and students' participation. One administrator said, "I hear teachers talk about the development of writing this year . . . everybody was very receptive to the learning, and they are wanting more because . . . they're seeing the potential of some really good writing with our kids that we've never seen before."



**93% of teachers (n=29) agreed or strongly agreed** on the teacher survey that the SWIM model helped them provide high quality specially designed instruction for their students.

**72% of teachers surveyed** in 2022-2023 believed that **SWIM had at least some impact** on creating IEP goals for their students.



## Results cont.

### SWIM impact on teacher practice

Overall, the evaluation found evidence that teachers can learn to implement SWIM with fidelity, although some steps in the instructional sequence were easier to implement than others. Teachers believed that having a coach to support them while implementing SWIM was integral, along with opportunities to share strategies and experiences with other teachers.



The SWIM coach documented that **64% of the 33 participants** across all three districts showed a **high degree of change in their instructional practice** over the course of the year.

### Focus Group Comments

Teachers shared their thoughts through participation in focus groups at the end of each project year. They described changes in their writing instruction and expectations for student writing.

- > Prior to SWIM, I would give a writing prompt and then help students edit. Now, students help choose what we will write about. (Year 2)
- > I was just so surprised that you know I wasn't giving them enough credit. I guess that they could do so much more" (Year 1)
- > I feel like they're doing more than I ever expected (Year 2).
- > I think for my kids it's just understanding that they are writers. I don't think they ever saw themselves as writers because it was a lot of drawing or labeling. We didn't have a way to direct them, so their level was that. They labeled the picture or they did this, and maybe they wrote a sentence and you were like, Good job. You got a sentence out. Now I'm like, oh no, you can keep going. And they will. And they're understanding more like, oh, I can add things to this, and I can be better. I can have other people read this and they like to read it.

Lesson videos show improvement in teachers' implementation of **SWIM steps** from fall to spring.



## Results cont.

### SWIM impact on student writing

In 2022-2023, fall and spring data on students' SWIM writing level were available for 49 students. The data show that 11 students (22%) demonstrated growth of at least one writing level in information gathering, 10 students (20%) demonstrated growth in informative and explanatory writing, and 8 students (16%) demonstrated growth in opinion writing. Many students showed growth within each writing level as well.

#### Information Gathering (N = 49)

	Spring		
Fall	Emergent	Transitional	Conventional
Emergent	27%	14%	6%
Transitional	4%	31%	2%
Conventional	0%	2%	14%

#### Informative and Explanatory Writing (N = 49)

	Spring		
Fall	Emergent	Transitional	Conventional
Emergent	31%	12%	6%
Transitional	4%	24%	2%
Conventional	4%	2%	14%

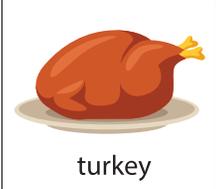
#### Opinion Writing (N = 49)

	Spring		
Fall	Emergent	Transitional	Conventional
Emergent	37%	12%	4%
Transitional	8%	22%	0%
Conventional	2%	2%	12%

## Example Student Work

Teachers submitted student writing samples in the fall and spring produced during SWIM instruction. Several samples showed growth in student writing skills over the course of the school year.

### Emergent

FALL	SPRING
<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;"> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; width: 45%;"> <p>We like</p> <div style="text-align: center;">  <p>pumpkin pie</p> </div> <p>hbba</p> <p>good, sour CD MRS</p> </div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; width: 45%;"> <p>We not like</p> <div style="text-align: center;">  <p>turkey</p> </div> <p>adc</p> </div> </div>	<p>hcboaaehg (like go slow)</p>

In the fall, the student communicated two descriptive words about the topic and selected a few letters to write about the topic, which her teacher scribed. In the spring, the student showed growth by using multiple words to produce a thought and selected more letters.

### Transitional

FALL	SPRING
<p>Wot bacpac (want backpack)</p> <p>Go pl (go pool)</p> <p>Put n wotr botl (put in water bottle)</p> <p>Put un snlgas (put on sunglasses)</p> <p>Gogls on u (goggles on eyes)</p>	<p>Name: _____ Date: _____</p> <p>Opinion Writing Brainstorm</p> <p>I like:  I lik Sprin = this Spring backn Flowers S Snow be t ifl</p> <p> why</p> <p>I do not like: </p>

In the fall, the student selected pictures and used a letter board with all 26 letters, sounding out the letters. In the spring, the student wrote sentences independently, clarified any unrecognizable letters, and incorporated novel thoughts.

## Teacher survey results about student writing

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- > 97% agreed or strongly agreed that the SWIM model improved students' writing skills
- > Survey open-ended comment: [SWIM] has had a profound impact on students' communication, and sharing ideas, and then writing about those ideas. (Year 1)
- > Survey open-ended comment: Students who typically have a strong dislike for writing were willing to participate, engage in activities, and had less behaviors during writing time. (Year 1)

## Focus group results about student writing

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- > I have a kiddo that has gone from using three-word sentences, to using his device to create a sentence that has a who, what, where. Everything is involved and he's doing it on his own, and he's making five to six sentences on the same topic and just staying there, which is – I don't know how I got him there, but we got there!
- > One of the strongest [areas of] growth with one of my students was . . . writing more but more with detail, and our sentences being just phrases or having phrases versus complex compound sentences. . . we're actually getting all forms of sentence writing. . .

## Implications/What's next?

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The SWIM evaluation provides evidence that the program was valued by participants and positively impacted teachers' writing instruction. Stakeholders viewed the SWIM model as a guiding structure for pedagogy, which gave teachers more confidence in teaching writing, and yielded positive outcomes for their students. However, the evaluation findings suggest that teachers need more time and support than one year to fully implement all components of the SWIM intervention. The top barriers to implementation across both project years were difficulty getting some students to generate or communicate their ideas, difficulty engaging due to behavioral issues or absenteeism, and lack of opportunities to collaborate with other teachers. The SWIM team at ATLAS engaged in efforts to ensure SWIM sustainability after the grant, which included (a) scaling up SWIM participation within one of the districts participating in project, led by teacher leaders who have participated in SWIM since the beginning of the grant and the district special education director, (b) dissemination of SWIM products hosted on the ATLAS SWIM website, and (c) recruitment of new participants through additional states, districts, and other interested stakeholders who support teachers of students with intellectual disabilities.

SWIM shows promise in supporting improved literacy outcomes that result from high-quality writing instruction. Future work to develop and test the model can include multiple applications including, applying the structure of the SWIM intervention to another content area such as science, expanding the learning maps to cover additional writing types and purposes, and integrating the SWIM approach into interventions that address comprehensive literacy instruction for students with intellectual disabilities.

## End Notes

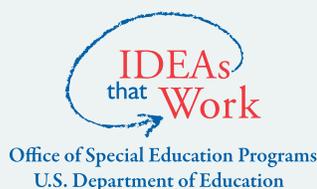
- <sup>1</sup> Pennington, R., Delano, M., & Scott, R. (2014). Improving cover-letter writing skills of individuals with intellectual disabilities. *Journal of Applied Behavioral Analysis*, 47, 204-208.; Pennington, R. C., Foreman, L. H., Gurney, B. N. (2018). An evaluation of procedures for teaching students with moderate to severe disabilities to write sentences. *Remedial and Special Education*, 39(1), 27-38; Pennington, R. C., & Koehler, M. (2017). Effects of modeling, story templates, and self-graphing in the use of story elements by students with moderate intellectual disability. *Education and Training in Autism and Developmental Disabilities*, 52(3), 280-290.
- <sup>2</sup> Pennington, R. C., & Delano, M. E. (2012). Writing instruction for students with autism spectrum disorders: A review of literature. *Focus on Autism and Other Developmental Disabilities*, 27(3), 158-167.
- <sup>3</sup> Cannella-Malone, H. I., Konrad, M., & Pennington, R. C. (2015). ACCESS! Teaching writing skills to students with intellectual disability. *TEACHING Exceptional Children*, 47(5), 272-280.
- <sup>4</sup> Joseph, L. M., & Konrad, M. (2009). Teaching students with intellectual or developmental disabilities to write: A review of the literature. *Research in Developmental Disabilities*, 30(1), 1-19.
- <sup>5</sup> Miller, K. M., & Little, M. E. (2018). Examining the effects of SRSD in combination with video self-modeling on writing by third grade students with learning disabilities. *Exceptionality*, 26(2), 81-105.
- <sup>6</sup> Harris, K. R., & Graham, S. (2016). Self-regulated strategy development in writing: Policy implications of an evidence-based practice. *Policy Insights from the Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, 3(1), 77-84.
- <sup>7</sup> Harris, K. R., & Graham, S. (2016). Self-regulated strategy development in writing: Policy implications of an evidence-based practice. *Policy Insights from the Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, 3(1), 77-84.

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