Public Abstract

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Title:An Examination of the Structural Relationships of Adolescent Writing: Implications of the Simple View of Writing

Writing is a complex process for many students, especially for students with learning disabilities and those who experience difficulties with language and the writing process. Nevertheless, writing has become the gateway for both academic and post-secondary success. Over about the last 30 years, models of writing have been developed to represent the components of writing that best capture writing proficiency. One model that is often used today, is the Simple View of Writing, a model that suggests relationships between transcription level skills (e.g., handwriting, spelling), self-regulation executive functions (e.g., planning, organizing, attention), text generation (e.g., idea development and translation), and working memory (Berninger & Amtmann, 2003; Berninger et al., 2002; Gough & Tunmer, 1986; Juel, Griffith, and Gough, 1986). To date, however, this model has not been studied at the high school level. The purpose of this study was to test the Simple View of Writing with a sample of 9th grade students. By identifying the best fitting model, the goal was to better understand the relationship between the variables and to explore the extent to which struggling writers differ from non-struggling writers on a variety of writing and cognitive tasks.

Structural equation modeling using exploratory factor analysis was used to examine the structural relationships of the Simple View of Writing model. One-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to determine whether statistically significant differences exist between struggling and non-struggling writers on the observed variables (standardized assessments). Results reveal a 2-factor model (transcription/working memory + text generation [a fluency factor]), suggesting that writing, at the high school level, at least within this sample of 9th grade students, is more multi-dimensional. One-way ANOVAs reveal statistically significant differences between struggling and non-struggling writers on all measures except the scales and indices of the Behavior Rating Inventory of Executive Function-Self Report (BRIEF-SR) and on the Graphic Speed task of the Detailed Assessment of Speed of Handwriting (DASH). Though this study does not confirm the Simple View of Writing model, it does confirm that writing is not simple and perhaps even suggests that there is a more intertwined nature of the component structure than the triangular structure indicates for adolescent writers.