

Strategy Instruction: A Flexible, Integrated, and Intensifiable Approach to Meet the Academic and Behavioral Needs of Youth in Residential Facilities

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What is Strategy Instruction?

Strategy Instruction is an approach used to teach a variety of academic skills, including in the domains of reading, writing, and math. Many students, particularly students served in residential facilities, struggle to master **how** to complete academic skills such as comprehending a paragraph, solving a multi-step math problem, and writing a paragraph. The benefit of strategy instruction is it shows students **how** to learn the content by breaking down an academic task into a series of distinct steps which include modeling, scaffolded practice, independent practice, and self-reflection (Pressley et al., 1989). These steps are then explicitly taught to students.

Strategy instruction is flexible and can be integrated across all content areas (e.g., math, reading, writing) and across all grade levels making it an effective, cost-efficient approach for teaching academics.

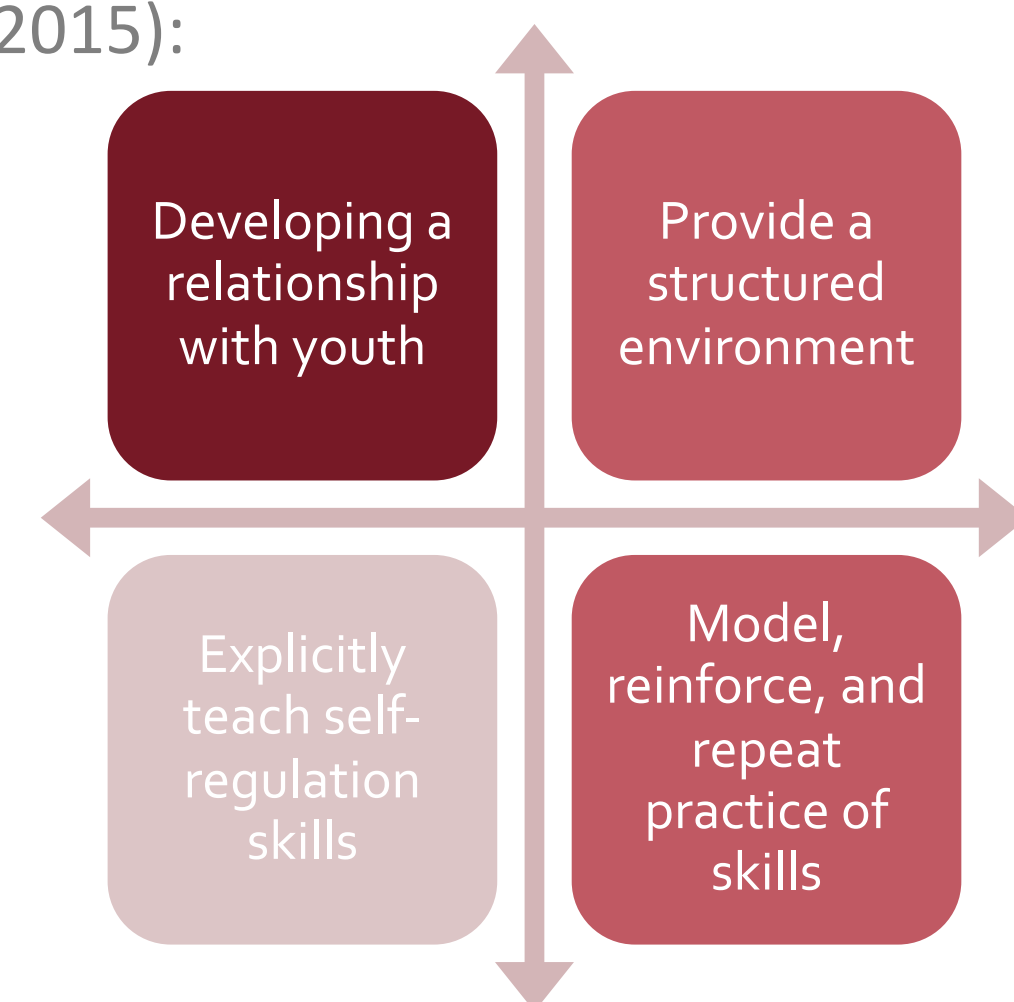
Examples of strategy instruction include note-taking strategies, chunking, SQ4R (Survey, Question, Read, Reflect, Recite, Review, and Self-Regulated Strategy Development (SRSD).

Self-Regulation

Self-regulation is a set of skills that allow students to manage and regulate their thinking, emotions, and actions. Students who can self-regulate are able to, when faced with a task, the ability to make a plan, monitor their plan, make choices as needed, and reflect on what worked. Self-regulation skills include goal setting, self-instructions, self-monitoring, self-evaluation, and self-reinforcement.

Students in residential facilities often have more pronounced self-regulation deficits than their typically developing peers. Many students in residential facilities have histories of traumatic experiences, which can adversely affect the development of self-regulation skills (Chatterjee et al., 2015), which in turn can negatively impact academic, social, and behavioral gains (Murray & Rosanbalm, 2017).

Residential facilities are uniquely set up to support the development of self-regulation skills of the students they serve. Here are four ways residential facilities can support self-regulation development (Murray et al., 2015):

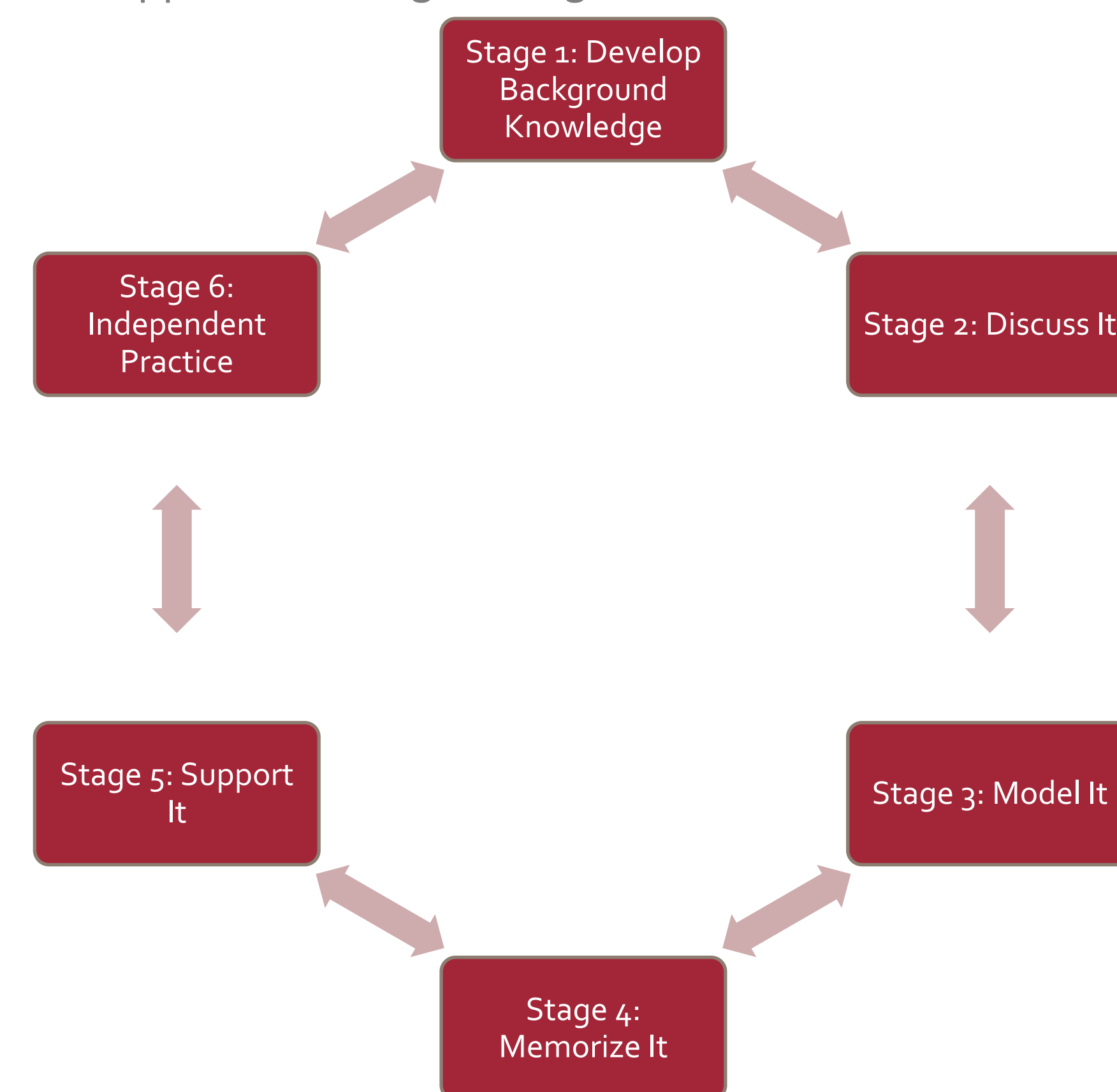


Self-Regulated Strategy Development

Self-regulated strategy development (SRSD) is one of type of strategy instruction approach that also embeds the explicit teaching and use of self-regulation skills during an academic task (Harris et al., 2008). Goal setting, self-instructions, self-monitoring, and self-reinforcement skill are built into each lesson through direct instruction, modeling, scaffolded support, and independent practice (Graham & Harris, 2018).

SRSD was originally developed to teach writing, and has since expanded to teach reading, vocabulary, and math skills. Depending on the academic skill, teachers can expect 5-7 lessons used to teach the skill to mastery. It is recommended lessons occur 3-5 times per week, with lessons lasting 30-50 minutes. Because SRSD uses a mastery approach, some lessons may be repeated until students master the concepts and objectives.

The SRSD approach is taught using six recursive instructional stages:



During Stage 1: Developing Background Knowledge, teachers spend time identifying prerequisite skills (e.g., the ability to write complete sentences for a writing strategy) needed by students to use the strategy. Stage 2: Discuss It, the teacher spends time describing the strategy to students, allowing students to connect how learning the strategy will impact their own learning and learning outcomes. Stage 3: Model It, includes the modeling of the strategy through a think aloud, letting students not only see the strategy used, but also hear what the teacher is thinking during strategy use. Stage 4: Memorize It: focuses on helping students memorize the steps to the strategy, as well as how to complete each step. During Stage 5: Scaffold It: teachers provided scaffolded support as students begin using the strategy on their own. This is often where lessons are repeated, as pulling the scaffolded support too soon could result in students learning the strategy incorrectly or not at all. Finally in Stage 6: Independent Practice students are able to demonstrate the ability to use the strategy independently.

Intensifying Strategy Instruction

For some students in residential facilities, the SRSD instructional approach and self-regulation components may need to be intensified by adjusting the dosage or frequency of the intervention (Sanders et al., 2021). In addition to increasing the frequency of lessons or changing the environment (e.g., small group instruction vs. large group instruction), the four self-regulation components can also be intensified.

Goal Setting: Goal setting is frequently used to support behavioral outcomes, but less frequently used to support academic outcomes. Some students may create unrealistic goals, or struggle to independently set and reflect on goals. To intensify this skill, teachers can:

- Provide explicit instruction on goal setting
- Meet with students for Individual Conferencing on goal setting and progress.

Self-Monitoring: Self-Monitoring is a critical skill to support students in completing a multi-step academic task. Self-monitoring includes assessing whether or not behavior has occurred and if a change of action is required. When students are able to self-monitor they can reflect during an academic task to see if they are on track to complete it. For students who struggle to self-monitor teachers can:

- Teach students to self-monitor their attention on a task
- Teach students to self-monitor their time spent on parts of a task

Self-Instructions: Self-Instructions are statements students make to themselves as they work on a task. These statements are task-specific statements that help students focus on what needs to happen next during the strategy. Many times students in residential facilities get stuck in a negative thought pattern, causing their self-instructions to be overwhelming negative (e.g., "I can't do this"). Teachers can intensify self-instruction instruction in order to help students use positive self-instructions (e.g., "I'm doing a great job" or "I need to check to see if I've used all my strategy steps."). To intensify this skill, teachers can:

- Provide visual prompts (e.g., on a sticky note, on the board)
- Provide verbal pre-corrections and prompts (e.g., prompt students to use a self-instruction at the beginning of a lesson)

Self-Reinforcement: Self-reinforcement includes identifying a reinforcer to be applied when a specific criterion is reached. In other words, when students meet a preset goal, they can self-award a desirable reinforcer. To support this skill, teachers can create a self-reinforcement plan to help students self-monitor if they had reached the identified criterion.

Because it can be difficult for students to self-reinforce in residential facilities due to safety concerns and environmental structure, teachers may also increase the amount of positive reinforcement provided.

Strategy Instruction in Residential Facilities

Strategy instruction can increase student motivation, improve student academic skills, and may result in students' feeling more ownership over their own learning.

Strategy instruction, particularly SRSD, has been used in residential facilities to improve reading and writing skills (e.g., Ennis, 2016; Sanders et al., 2018).

When implementing SRSD in residential facilities, teachers will have to consider the likelihood that students may need additional lessons to develop prior knowledge and necessary skills, students may need more time to master the strategy, and due to attrition, some students may leave before lessons are finished or arrive in the middle of the lessons (Ennis & Jolivet, 2014).

Strategy Instruction Resources

- <https://srsdonline.org> – SRSD Online provides premier, step-by-step training on the SRSD instructional approach, as well as resources for reading and writing mnemonics.
- <http://www.thinksrsd.com/free-resources-to-share/> - Think SRSD provides free SRSD resources created by teachers working with thinkSRSD and Karen Harris & colleagues.
- <https://srsdstrategies.weebly.com> – The Teacher Toolbox of SRSD strategies has information about the SRSD instructional approach, as well as downloadable lessons plans and materials.
- https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/Docs/InterventionReports/wwc_sr_sd_111417.pdf - this link is to the IES intervention report on the SRSD approach

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