

INTERVENTION STRATEGY: COPS

Brief Description: COPS is a mnemonic strategy that cues students through an editing process to edit written work for mechanical errors and clarity. Editing makes the written product more legible and understandable to a reader. This mnemonic strategy should be posted in the room and taught to the students through a teach, demonstrate and practice model. This strategy was developed by the University of Kansas Institute for Research in Learning Disabilities and the steps for implementation below have been adapted from *Strategy Instruction for student with Learning Disabilities* (Reid & Lienemann, 2006).

Materials Needed: Poster outlining the COPS strategy. “Think aloud” for teaching/modeling the strategy.

Implementation: This strategy can be implemented individually, in small groups, or whole group. It can be facilitated by a teacher, paraprofessional or adult volunteer.

1. Make a poster Outlining the strategy:

COPS Revision Strategy

- C-** Have I capitalized the first word and proper names?
- O-** How is the overall appearance?
- P-** Have I put in commas and end punctuation?
- S-** Have I spelled all the words right?

2. Activate the student’s prior knowledge by reviewing the tasks involved in the strategy above. If the child does not have mastery of one of the components of the process above, additional instruction in this area may be required.

3. Discuss the strategy and why it is important for the student to edit their work. Discuss that errors in work can distract the reader from the meaning and point of the task. Get buy in for the strategy. Talk about how it has helped other students in the past, etc. Be sure the students see its value and make a commitment to using it. Review the steps for the strategy with the students and the prompts that correspond to the letters.

4. Model the strategy using a think aloud.

Example of a Think Aloud to teach the COPS Editing Strategy:

This excerpt from *Strategy Instruction for Students with Learning Disabilities* (Reid and Lienemann, 2006):

“OK, what is it I have to do here? I know, I have to edit my paper. Editing is hard for me, but I know that using my COPS strategy will help me do a good job. I can remember COPS because police ‘clean up the neighborhood,’ and I need to ‘police up,’ or clean up my paper by editing, and making sure I don’t leave any errors (rule breakers). The COPS strategy can help me to remember what to do when I am editing. OK, I can do this if I try my best and use my strategy. I should write down the steps of my strategy so I don’t forget any of them; OK, *C* stands for *capitalize*- Have I capitalized the first word and proper names? Next is *O*. What does *O* stand for? I can’t remember. I know, I can just look at the wall chart... let’s see... the chart says, ‘Overall appearance- How is the overall appearance?’ Oh yeah, I remember that now; I better write

it down. Let's see, then is *P*, for *punctuation*- Have I put in commas and end punctuation? Good, I'm remembering most of this; I can do this! Finally comes *S*, which stands for *spelling*- Have I spelled all the words right? Great, I got them all written down; I'm really doing well. OK, What do I do now? I need to start with *C* and ask myself, 'Have I capitalized the first words and proper names?' Let's see... oops, here's a sentence that needs a capital letter at the beginning and ooooh, I forgot to capitalize the name of this town. Good thing I'm going over this! OK, that seems to be all of them. What's next? I have written down *O*. I need to ask myself, 'How is the overall appearance?' Well, I should clean up some of my handwriting; I can barely read it, and if I can't read it I'm sure no one else will either! Oh, there are quite a few extra marks, too. I need to erase those and clean up my paper; I want it to look good when I hand it in, maybe I will get a gold star. I would really like one of those gold stars on my paper! OK, all clean; it looks good. Now, what do I need to do? What's after *O*? *O...P*; I need to ask myself, 'Have I put in commas and end punctuation?' I need to remember where to use commas. OK, I use commas when I am listing things; here is a list... I remembered to use commas. Way to go! When else do I use commas? I use commas to break up sentences, where I want a pause. Let's see, do I have any long sentences? Yep, here's one that could use a comma! Are there any others? No, I don't see any; looks good! How about that end punctuation? Oops, forgot a period at the end of a sentence, and I really should change that to a question mark. That's an asking sentence not a telling sentence. The rest of it looks really good. Wow, this is going really well! I like using this strategy, it's kind of fun, and I can't believe it, but I'm almost done! I'm up to the *S*, the last letter! I need to ask myself, 'Have I spelled all the words right?' This is kind of tough for me, but I know I can do it; I've come this far. I can't quit now! OK, Let me see... most of it looks OK, but there are a few words that I'm just not sure about. I better look those up in the dictionary. That's what we're supposed to do first if we're not sure how to spell a word... OK, all done! I did a great job; using the strategy and sticking with it really helped me remember what to look for when I'm editing my paper."

5. The children then memorize the strategy. You can facilitate this in many different ways. Ample practice and opportunities should be provided until the children can recite the steps.
6. Provide support for the strategy during implementation, through direct feedback during practice, verbal cuing, prompt cards, etc.
7. Eventually fade the teacher prompts until the children demonstrate the use of the strategy independently. Encourage other teachers to use the same strategy and post it in their classrooms as well.
8. Monitor students' progress in writing using writing samples and probes.

Schedule for implementation: The procedure should be taught until students have mastered the steps and use the strategy independently. Reinforcement of the strategy should occur daily.

Variations: A personal index card with the steps on it may be helpful as children learn the strategy. Also, this strategy can be modified to SH! COPS- which adds the dimensions of S-sentence clarity “Are all of my sentences clear?”; and H- Handwriting “Is this my very best handwriting? Do all of my Letters look good?”

Research Summary & References:

Schumaker, J.B., Deshler, D.D., Nolan, S., Clark, F.L., Alley, G.R., Warner, M.M. (1981) *Error monitoring: A learning strategy for improving academic performance of LD adolescents* (Research Rep. No. 34) Lawrence: University of Kansas

Reid, R. & Lienemann, T. (1996). *Strategy Instruction for Students with Learning Disabilities*, New York, NY. Guilford Press.

Tool/Attachments:

The file “[Think Aloud](#)” in the tools folder on this CD contains more information about using think alouds to teach children metacognitive processes.

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