Triple R Teaching

Hello, this is Anna Geiger from Reach All Readers, and I'm very excited to bring to you

approach to teaching writing in K-8. It's called thinkSRSD.

thinkSRSD is different from SRSD in that they're basically two groups that are kind of sharing the same ideas, but thinkSRSD has more of a practitioner bent where they're really helping teachers implement this approach in schools.

SRSD stands for self-regulated strategy development. It's basically a way of teaching students to be independent writers by first pre-assessing them, then teaching them how to write a particular type of writing, like a paragraph using an exemplar, so an example of good writing. Then it involves modeling, creating an original piece with your students, and then evaluating that writing using some kind of tool such as rockets for the primary grades where they color different parts of the rockets to show what they've included in their writing based on the criteria that you set. Students would look at their writing and they would evaluate it and set goals for the next time. That's where the self-regulation comes in.

In this episode, Leslie shares the research base for thinkSRSD, but she also walks us through the first week of lessons, and then we talk about how you would continue the cycle in successive weeks. We also break down how this looks different in kindergarten versus the middle grades, but how the general idea is the same. The really neat thing is that even in the early grades, even in kindergarten, you're teaching, through oral language, the structure of writing.

I hope the questions I ask Leslie clear up some things for you, and then at the end, we talk about a very specific set of steps that you can take to learn more and start to implement this approach.

This is not something you have to pay a lot of money for. Most of the materials that you're going to get are going to be free, unless you take their affordable training. You can start to do this without paying anything.

I want to share with you all those steps. They're going to be in the show notes, so make sure you check that out at the end of the episode. With that, we're going to get started!

Anna Geiger: Welcome, Dr. Laud!

Leslie Laud: Welcome! Thank you.

Anna Geiger: I'm so glad you're here to talk to me about thinkSRSD because this is something I see a lot in Facebook groups when people are asking about what writing program to look into, and this is often brought up. I also know that it's evidence-based, so we're excited to get into that. But before we do, could you tell us about yourself and what's brought you to what you're doing now?

Leslie Laud: Sure. So I'm 35 years into our field. I've been teaching since around 1990, and for the first decade that I was teaching, I was working on a doctorate. When I finished the doctorate, I did a mixture of action research in the classroom, and I was involved in some research studies, but I continued teaching, working as a teacher and a school administrator. Then about five years ago, I switched over and began doing research more in the foreground.

About 10 years into my career, I stepped out for maternity leave and the person who took over for me was absolutely wonderful and gentle and sensitive, and she knew that she had my babies for a little time and that I would be coming back. She wanted to try something new, so she sent me an email saying, "Can I try this new way of teaching writing?"

My knee jerk was no, but then I thought she wants to try it, and I said, "Well, can you collect a pre and a post? Then let's look at what the gains are."

The gains blew me away. It was like nothing I had ever seen. Her name is Pooja Patel, and the two of us began offering professional development on this approach.

Here's a little story, there was this little.... Well, she was a middle school girl and she had lifelong learning disabilities. Pooja had worked with her, and then she went back into class and wrote an essay in class independently, and her English teacher was so blown away at what she produced that she asked her to read it in front of the class. Her mother came in. This child had never experienced anything like this. I was teared up

when I heard this story. Pooja said even the other teachers were moved.

We knew right away that there was something really powerful to this approach, but then the work that we had to do was, okay, we finished our four week unit. How do we make this real and come alive over an entire school year?

Pooja and I taught across the hall and we were running back and forth sharing it with our colleagues, Pooja began running PDs for our colleagues. We figured out that we brought in our rich literacy background, whereas the developers were not using it as classroom teachers, they were using it in research studies. We kind of fleshed it all out and gave it bones.

I began working with schools, we figured out how to make it work K-12, what to do in each year level, how to order the genres. As a researcher, I kept tracking the research world, and everything that was coming out in the research world, we were bringing in and augmenting it.

Then eventually, we began doing our own action research on it and publishing our own peer reviewed studies in parallel with Dr. Karen Harris, doing some publications with her. Then about five years ago, I began doing more large-scale research on the thinkSRSD model, which is more of a whole-school, full-year model way of using the approach.

Anna Geiger: So SRSD stands for self-regulated strategy development, and I've got to say that was a little bit of a barrier for me for a while. I thought, "This sounds complicated! I'm not sure I want to study this." Then I did take some coursework from the organization, and I've learned a lot since then. But I think that that name can be a little overwhelming. It's a six stage gradual release, explicit instruction, pedagogical approach. Let's break that down and explain what exactly that means.

Leslie Laud: Sure. It is a mouthful. People have told me to change the name, and people have told Karen Harris to change the name. She's not going to. I'm not going to. It does have self-regulation in there, which we all love.

The approach, as you said, has some theoretical elements to it, like six stages, like certain older mnemonics that were used in the early research.

There are actually two organizations that offer professional development. There's thinkSRSD, we're the original providers, and we began doing PD on it in New York City and around the nation starting in 2008. SRSD online learned the approach from us and created their own course. It's a little smaller. It's not as comprehensive. We hadn't known that they were doing it, and they really ground it into the theory, so I think it's great for researchers who really want to understand the theory, but in practice, we had to remove some elements that were not resonating with teachers and that were actually confusing teachers.

We kept the core element of mnemonics. However, the more recent mnemonics that have been studied are TIDE. All of the recent research over the past couple of years has been looking at TIDE because it's more versatile. TREE is a much older mnemonic. I don't know if any current researchers are looking at that.

Then we also had to take out some of the really heavy theory, like the six stages...

Anna Geiger: Okay.

Leslie Laud: ... because it was confusing teachers.

Anna Geiger: Gotcha.

Leslie Laud: They were like, "Well, where am I?" So we just changed it and made it an easier lift, and then that is something that we do down the road in follow up PD.

Anna Geiger: So you just explained the difference between different organizations that are using this approach, correct?

Leslie Laud: Yes.

Anna Geiger: So if someone hears self-regulated strategy development and they wonder, "What does this look like from day to day in my classroom?" I know it can be used across the grades from kindergarten and up, so maybe can you give us an overview of what this might look like in a classroom?

Leslie Laud: Sure. The overview that I would give you is thinkSRSD because that's what I live and breathe every day, and that is the model that we fleshed out.

The SRSD alone model is the one that's been studied for eight weeks, 10 weeks, in controlled studies with a lot of developer involvement.

Anna Geiger: Okay.

Leslie Laud: Ours is meant to be used more independently.

Just to give you an overview of how independently, and then I'll go into what it is and what it looks like...

We had a coach in Wisconsin last year who took our e-learning as a teacher, so independently with no help from us, and then rolled it out in those classrooms, and then rolled it out school-wide and got complete uptake. She'll say there's always one or two who are hesitant, but she had complete uptake and when they took their state assessments, they were all using the thinkSRSD strategies. We've really fine tuned how to use it K-8.

So what is it, The thinkSRSD model? We start with three core lessons to make it really easy, and these have been ironed out after decades. Pooja and I spent 18 years trying to figure out how to make this easier for teachers to use and to get a handle on.

We do a pre-assessment before we begin. Some people call that lesson zero.

Anna Geiger: Okay.

Leslie Laud: For the pre-assessment, we recommend, in alignment with the research, that you first talk about, what is a paragraph? Show an example of a paragraph. Write a paragraph together collaboratively as a class so that the kids know what it is that they're doing. Then you collect a pre-assessment, and it can be aligned to your curriculum. We have a lot of free materials up at thinkSRSD that you can take if you

want to see what pre-assessments look like. But that's how you get started, and you collect that so that your kids can set goals.

Now, you're also going to look at it as a baseline, but if you've got 30 kids, your kids are really going to be driving the bus right from day one because the next day, lesson one, is when you show them what a strong paragraph should look like in response to that same pre-assessment.

Lesson one is where you onboard, curb cut, into your classroom, all the main tools. POWeR, TIDE, sentence level instruction, word level, you onboard it all in by starting with looking back at the pre.

Let's say we read about penguins. We're going to write a sentence about penguins. Before that, we may generate some vocabulary about them, but then we're going to create a main idea sentence about penguins, and that's your gist.

Then we're going to introduce you to POWeR and TIDE, which will become the two tools that you're going to use all year long in your writing, in opinion, informative, friendly letter, persuasive, whatever kind of writing you're doing, except storytelling. That's different.

But for the bulk, 80% of the writing you're going to do is going to be this kind and use TIDE. We call it TIDEL, and we add a language box. We show that this is how the text is structured, it's structured according to TIDE, and then we make a language box, and it has strong vocabulary.

POWeR is the writing process, the strategic thinking processes. They're not necessarily linear, but they're the strategic processes that you follow when you are taking yourself independently through the writing process and using tools like TIDEL to help you structure your thinking before you go into writing. So that's lesson one.

Anna Geiger: Before we move on, can you remind us what all those letters stand for?

Leslie Laud: Sure. So TIDE is topic, important evidence or information, D is details or detailed examination or analysis, and then E is end.

Anna Geiger: Okay.

Leslie Laud: We have songs, "Topic tells what it's all about, important details..." And we've got the kids singing and touching parts of their body so that they memorize TIDE, because as Karen Harris found, it is very important that they memorize this right from day one. In gen ed, they memorize it pretty quickly. For kids with language issues, we spend a little bit more time on memorization, but we teach those.

Then POWeR stands for... We call the P prepare. That was an innovation that a group in Texas who's working on this in math came up with, and we'd been thinking about it. So the P is prepare, and that's where I gather all my notes and start to arrange them. O is organize, and you organize with either TIDE or a narrative mnemonic.

Anna Geiger: Okay.

Leslie Laud: Then W you write, write your draft. Then edit and revise. We make the E small because we want them to do more revision than editing.

Anna Geiger: Right. So the POWeR is to get them through the writing process and the TIDE or the storytelling is to how to structure their text?

Leslie Laud: 100%. Yeah. One is a process mnemonic and one is a product mnemonic.

Anna Geiger: Okay, step two.

Leslie Laud: All right. So lesson two, we tell teachers it's going to take about a week, and we make it really easy and really clear. The first day of the week, you're going to collect your pre, then you're going to do lesson one, which is rolling in all the tools, and we call that teach. Lesson one, we call teach. You're teaching the tools. You're teaching the exemplar.

Lesson two, we call model. Now you're going to model how to use those tools, and this part's really fun. This is definitely our kids' favorite part where we are taking their ideas, we're writing in front of them, we're modeling a think aloud. We are shifting over

multiple writes over multiple weeks from modeling collaboratively, toward more and more independent writing. Some kids, within a couple of weeks, will be writing independently. Some take a little longer, but some are writing independently really quickly.

So we call that lesson model, and that's when you're standing in front of the room writing on the board POWeR, working through making an outline with TIDE and the language box, and the kids are copying it down in their notebooks. But the important part is they're changing it as they write it down, because they may not like my ideas.

Anna Geiger: Okay.

Leslie Laud: And that's leading toward the independence.

Then we're fading the organizers and we're slowly or pretty quickly guiding them to become more and more independently so that they can use POWeR and TIDE without us guiding it or helping them.

The pre-assessment takes about a day, 45 minutes. Lesson one takes about a day, 30-45 minutes, depending on the age. Lesson two, the modeling, the collaborative, takes about two days, sometimes three. Then the last lesson is one day again, and this is scoring. In a nutshell, a heuristic to help you remember what lesson one, two, and three are is teach, model, score.

Anna Geiger: Okay.

Leslie Laud: In this last lesson, we take out the exemplar that they color coded, and now we score it, and we score a below and we talk about the difference.

At this point, they're chomping at the bit. They all want their pre back, they want to fix it, they want a chance to write again, and we've kicked in that magical force of goal setting and volition. So they're invested, they understand what's being asked, they understand how they can do better, and they jump in and they want to keep writing and produce something again that'll be even better. We sometimes will have them take out their pre and write a goal down at the bottom just to kind of ride that wave of the enthusiasm and the motivation that's kicking in.

Those are the three lessons, it takes about a week. Once you've got those kicked in, then we move to POWeR cycles.

Anna Geiger: So at the beginning of the week you've given them just a brief instruction so they know what they need to do for the pre-assessment, but not a lot of writing instruction. They put that down, you save those, and then you teach them how to structure their writing. And the color coding of the exemplar, that would be something you do together as a group, correct?

Leslie Laud: Yes.

Anna Geiger: So for TIDE, this is the topic sentence, these are the details, and so on. And then as you do more modeling during the week, they get more of an idea of what you're looking for. Then they get their original paper back, and then they can say, "Here's where I did well, here's where I didn't, based on what I've learned this week. And here's what I want to work on for next time."

Leslie Laud: Yes.

Anna Geiger: All right. So before we move on too far, help me understand how that first week of lessons looks different in a kindergarten classroom versus a fourth grade classroom.

Leslie Laud: So for kindergarten and the upper grades, it looks different in the beginning of the year.

In kindergarten, the students may not be forming letters yet, may not even know their letters yet, so we start orally.

Anna Geiger: Okay.

Leslie Laud: And we model... Maybe on day one, you read Chrysanthemum. Then instead of creating a morning message where you just put the final product up, you

show the kids that there are steps we can follow when we're putting our ideas on paper. Those steps are first, pick our ideas. Tell me about Chrysanthemum's name. Then they'll often put up a couple of words and pictures for the kids who aren't decoding yet to be able to follow along and engage. Then turn that into a TIDE planner, so pick up the words, put them into order, pick up the pictures, turn that into a write. I'm writing in front of the class, and the kids are helping me sound out the words.

Very early in the year, you're just scribing and the kids are watching, but as they begin to learn phonological and phonemic skills, then...

I saw a kindergarten teacher doing this recently. She said to the class, "Okay, we're going to write, 'Animals hibernate.' What syllables do we hear in animals? Ah-ni-mals. Great. Now pick up your whiteboards. Let's do /ă/ /n/, and let's sound it out!" So you're reinforcing. You need to have a separate explicit phonics and phonemic awareness program, but you're reinforcing that as you compose in front of your class.

Then at the end there's a rocket, and that is that score. We draw a rocket. Do we have all our parts? Did we tell the reader what we're going to be talking about? Do we include three ideas? Did we have an ending? Then we color in the rocket.

If you're visualizing this, imagine a kindergarten welcome morning meeting board. Now imagine four panels on that, the first being pick ideas, the second being organize. They can be one on top of another. Then create the message, and it can be about Chrysanthemum's name or anything you've read. Then do a rocket to score, did I include all my parts? So that's the earliest grades.

By second or third, they would begin by collecting the pre, a warm pre where they've set the kids up for success, they've made it seem exciting. "I want to know what you think about penguins! We've just read books and saw a video on penguins. I want to know what you think." And so you would collect your pre. Then after that, you pass out the color coded exemplar. Either then or later in the week when you score, they can look back at their pre and start writing their goals.

In the upper grades, we just use increasingly complex texts and we bring up the mnemonics. We would call it topic, information, detail, end in kindergarten, but by middle school, we're calling it topic introduction, tag, title, author gist, thesis. That's all your T.

Anna Geiger: Okay.

Leslie Laud: Your I becomes important evidence, the D is detailed analysis, and then the ending is more robust. We have a second book of lessons that details out how to bring this up and down for all the different grade levels.

Anna Geiger: So in kindergarten, it's modeling and you're doing it altogether. They're still doing the evaluation, but we're evaluating what we worked on together as a class, not what they're doing on their own.

Leslie Laud: In kindergarten, we tend to wait until November or January, and then we do collect a pre-assessment from them.

Anna Geiger: Okay.

Leslie Laud: But we do it small group. So they're back at the kidney table, they're dictating drawing. Some of them are writing by that point. They whisper dictate, because if they say it out loud, then the entire table picks it up. So they come over, they whisper something. You can draw lines or whatever systems you have running in your kindergarten classes.

But we do like to collect a sample. Even if it's just squiggles, that's great, because in parent meetings in March, you can show here was your child in November or January with three squiggles, and now you've got four sentences. It's very exciting to see the growth. So you do want to have that pre that's individual.

Anna Geiger: So if a child, say you're doing the pre-assessments, and maybe they write... So do they write anything at all? Do they write with invented spelling? Do they just dictate to you? How do you decide how that works on a child by child basis?

Leslie Laud: Well, you're back at the kidney bean table and you've got your kids grouped. You may have a group by November or by January who actually can use phonetic spelling. I'm a believer in near point copying of the irregular words, so they may have a list of "was," "said," and the words that you can't sound out phonetically, but we don't want them calcifying and producing-

Anna Geiger: Sure.

Leslie Laud: ... those incorrectly spelled, so they have a near point copy on the table. They can refer to that. But yes, they're using phonetic spelling or they're dictating.

Anna Geiger: Okay.

When they make goals for themselves, what kind of goals might they make in kindergarten?

Leslie Laud: I was working with a kindergarten child recently who said she wanted to add more detail.

Anna Geiger: Okay.

Leslie Laud: She was pretty high level.

Anna Geiger: Okay.

Leslie Laud: She was already doing a good job, but she didn't have all of her Ds.

Anna Geiger: Okay.

Leslie Laud: For some of them, it's name a topic.

Anna Geiger: Okay.

Leslie Laud: Start off by putting the word octopuses, and then going to write about them.

Anna Geiger: So back to what you said before, you said near point copy. Is that what you said? I've never heard that phrase before.

Leslie Laud: Oh, so there's far point where you have a wall with the common words that students struggle to spell because they're not regular. But I always found, my background is special education, and I found that kids had a hard time tracking from the wall back to their paper, so I'm a believer in them having a plastic covered sheet that grows, or a notebook or something

Anna Geiger: Of everything they've been taught.

Leslie Laud: Right next to them.

Anna Geiger: Yeah, that makes a lot of sense because I know that there's research support for, and I know it has different names, the whole language word was invented spelling, but the phonetic spelling, as you said. It helps them build their phonemic awareness and practice what they know, but I agree that that makes really good sense to have that list of high frequency words. Because as you said, if they're spelling "was" as W-Z over and over and over, that's not good for them. You want them to practice writing it as it's spelled. That's a good advice.

Thank you. That really helps me understand a little bit more about how this gets started in kindergarten.

What about that second week? We've got these foundational lessons. How does this fit into the school day? Now let's maybe go in first or second grade, maybe second grade, so kids are... They're already writing sentences, they know how to write sentences. Is this something you put on at the end of your reading block? Do you have an actual writing time? I know that thinkSRSD or SRSD is not a curriculum exactly, so how does it tag onto what you're already doing?

Leslie Laud: Great question. So in kindergarten and one, and then I'll go right into two, we would be doing gist writing. So we've just read The Little Milkmaid or The Boy Who Cried Wolf, and we would do a gist statement. Who, did what, when, where, and why? What happened? They would actually put up their fingers, say it to a friend, and then dictate it. The teacher would write it, "Oh, look at that! There's a capital and a period, and I have spaces in between." So you are teaching...

With kids who have learning disabilities or struggle even more so, we might start with just who, do. Nancy Hennessy talks about that a lot. "The milk maid walked."

We start with those very early sentence skills, and we're working on those for the first week or two, but they get them quickly.

Anna Geiger: Okay.

Leslie Laud: We want to get into the whole digesting of the text, reading of the text, digesting it, and writing about it. But by second grade where they have got a grasp on sentences, then we're working to expand and vary the sentences.

We're still doing gist statements, but we had a first grade child a couple of weeks ago who said her teacher had taught her, who did what, when, where? She said, "You know what, you can open with a where!" The kids all tried it that day.

Then the next day a child ran up to her and said, "Look! I wrote about the fire engine, and I opened with a where phrase!"

So by second grade, we're working on sentence expansion, variation, and moving around the parts. That's five minutes every day, but it has a place to live because you can do it every time that you see, view, or do anything. Kindergartners go to art, or we just saw a two minute volcano clip. They're going to write a gist statement about that. They're doing that sentence work every single day for five minutes, and it has a place to live. It's after whatever you've just read aloud or after whatever you've just learned, so the sentence work is happening.

By second grade, we would start the year with a pause on your core curriculum so that you can roll this into your classroom, do the pre-assessment, show the exemplar, and then by midweek, now you open your core curriculum.

Anna Geiger: By core curriculum, you're talking your language arts, potentially a writing program or not?

Leslie Laud: I think if you have really high need kids, you could do a writing program in parallel. There are some very nicely sequenced programs. But I think once you've got the hang of this, I don't know how much you're going to need that.

Anna Geiger: Gotcha.

Leslie Laud: When I say your program, I mean your ELA, your language arts. That could be CKLA, it could be into Reading Wonders, whatever set of texts that your kids are reading to practice reading and then responding to.

Anna Geiger: Are we also referring to decodable texts potentially in the primary grades?

Leslie Laud: We've done some work with that. That is a nice way when your kids are ready to move to independence, to give them a decodable book and have them tell what bears do if it's a decodable about bears, but they're not rich enough to be developing the oral language.

thinkSRSD reinforces all of the early literacy foundational skills, but it's really more focused on the other side of the rope building, the oral language and the language comprehension. To do that, we need really rich meaty texts.

Anna Geiger: Gotcha, so this could just be your interactive read alouds that you've chosen.

Leslie Laud: 100%. Yes.

So you'd asked about week two. What you would do is week one, we've just really streamlined to make it an easy lift, high yield up and running in that one first week.

Then by week two, now you open up whatever texts you are teaching, so your ELA curriculum, your CKLA, your Wonders, whatever sets of texts you're reading to your students and learning about. You open those, and now you spend the week doing POWeR and doing teach, model, score over the week to those texts.

You're hitting on all the skills. My skill of the week is the spelling pattern of T-H and a morpheme, L-Y, and a list of vocabulary words. You're going to be reinforcing all of those because you're going to be bringing in more T-H words to your collaborative. You're going to bring in more L-Y because you want them using these skills in the wild, not just practicing them on worksheets.

In fact, I'll tell you our little insider secret is most of the schools that work with us end up dropping the workbooks because they're getting faster gains without them. You don't have to do the worksheets if you're practicing L-Y in context and using multiple L-Y words in your collaborative write. They're drawing in all those skills to their collaborative write planning, to the drafting, and when they score, they get bonus points if they use the eight vocabulary words of the week. You can bring all of that in.

And since they're writing about the topics they're reading about, the vocabulary words are natural. You're not plugging them in like in the olden days, "Here are ten vocab words, write a paragraph." These are all vocab words that are coming from the story of The Little Boy Who Cried Wolf, so it's natural to then use them when you write about that story.

So Monday, they're teaching, which means they're reading the story.

Anna Geiger: Okay.

Leslie Laud: They're teaching the kids about adverbial clauses, or how to do stronger analysis, or how to write a topic sentence. They're teaching on Monday.

Then they're modeling Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, and by Thursday afternoon and Friday, they're into score.

During the week, the kids are all either writing with you but producing some that's unique, or becoming more and more independent, and they're using their text. We blend right in with all the ELA curricula. We just take part of their writing block time to be able to do this.

The teachers all find they have more time on their hands than they ever did before because they're getting through their standards more quickly and efficiently because writing is such a quick way to move and build the literacy skills faster than just the consumption of reading.

Anna Geiger: Right, because we know so much about... Research is clear that writing about reading helps you understand what you're reading better and remember it.

I want to go back to what you said before because I love that. You said we do this after you see, view, and do, so if you see something, experience something, watch something, and that gives it a place to live in your school day.

We talked about having this be part of what you're reading aloud or what they're reading, but then also the gist statements, are those two separate things?

Leslie Laud: They are a little bit separate. That's a really great insight. Yes, so the gist is our sentence level work, and that we are doing every day, five days a week, after every read aloud. Teachers vary it up. They say, "Okay, we're going to do it orally today. You're going to dictate. I'm going to write. We're going to vote on our best gist. Or you're all going to write them on note cards. We're going to hang them up and vote under which gist we think best captures the main idea."

You're working on two things. You're working on sentence skills, but you're also building a mental model of the text that you've just read. The gist is happening every single day. If you teach CKLA, you have a new read aloud every single day. You're going to write a gist every single day.

You won't have time obviously to do a full POWeR cycle in response to all of the texts that you're reading, all of the videos. You'll pick the main selection for the week.

Anna Geiger: Okay.

Leslie Laud: You'll pick one that you're going to go more deeply in on and write a response to it, draft it, polish it, score it. In that way, the reading and writing are like Lego blocks that disconnect because you'll do all your read alouds, but you won't respond to them all. You're going to snap off and spend a couple more days on a read aloud from an older day.

Anna Geiger: When they do the scoring, is that on the piece of writing that they produce at the end of each week? They score that, and then they set a goal for the next week? Then do you have some kind of system where they go back to check their goals and see how they did?

Leslie Laud: Some teachers have more organized systems than others. When I taught, I valued every precious instructional moment, and so I would teach right up to the bell, and then I would have a mass, a pile of papers, and I'd gather them all together and put them in a basket. Then once every two or three weeks, we'd take out the basket, you'd find your recent writes, and then you would chart how much you grew. Other teachers are more organized about it.

But yes, they would have a chart where they have multiple rockets or where they have an XY axis and they would see their scores going up.

The very first time I ever did this, what sold me was I had a group of all boys, they all had various learning disabilities, and they were in fifth grade. This one guy who was kind of like the group leader, the one they all looked up to, leaned over and said to the kind of shy guy, who was really sharp and very well respected, and he said, "Look, our scores are going up in our graph." Then he patted him on the back and he said, "That means we're getting better at writing."

Anna Geiger: Aw.

Leslie Laud: I think he'd never felt he could get better, but he WAS getting better. It's such a powerful system.

Anna Geiger: Well, let's talk about something we haven't talked about yet, and that is the self-regulated strategy portion.

I was listening to an interview with Karen Harris who helped develop this whole idea back in the 80s, and she said that they had studies where they left out this part, the self-coaching part, and they did not do as well. This is the part where I know I as a teacher would probably say, "Oh, we could skip that part. Let's just leave that out, where they're kind of coaching themselves." But that's actually essential. Maybe you can get into what that is all about and why it may not be as strange as it sounds.

Leslie Laud: It is essential. When I first started teaching this and I was across the hall from Pooja, I used to go in and hang my head sheepishly and say, "I'm not getting to that self-regulation part because I'm so tied up in the content. I need them to understand Alexander the Great and what happened, and I'm not doing as much with the goal setting."

So you're absolutely right. It's like a phased-in approach. We definitely see stronger gains in the data from teachers who are really diving into the goal setting and the scoring every week, without a doubt. Yes, the scoring and the goal setting is the first thing that gets dropped. It's like the canary in the coal mine. If we're pressed for time and coaches going into...

Last year, we surveyed teachers three times a year, how are you doing with using this? We could see by midyear, teachers weren't doing as much with the goal setting and the self-regulation, and we are doing whole PDs this month for those schools, "You've got to do the scoring. Here's how. Here are some systems."

The scoring and the goal setting really get that self-regulation going. Also having a routine and doing it every week and getting used to the mnemonics, the mnemonics really facilitate the self-regulation. There's a piece called self-talk.

Anna Geiger: Right. That's what I'm referring to mostly. Yep. Tell me about that.

Leslie Laud: Yeah, and the research studies that Karen Harris is referring to, I believe that they were the goal setting.

With the self-talk, I read a study recently and it jived with kind of what I see, and that was they use self-talk in half the classes, but not the other half, and the outcomes were the same,-

Anna Geiger: Oh, okay.

Leslie Laud: ... which means you're not losing anything by doing it.

Anna Geiger: Sure.

Leslie Laud: But I believe that there's a side benefit to doing it. I've never thought that was the secret that was moving our scores up. It was teaching the genre features, giving the mnemonics, having the goal setting.

Anna Geiger: But I could see how the goal setting would definitely be something you would drop, where you'd be tempted just to leave that behind.

So what about the self-talk? I've seen some videos of kids doing this in thinkSRSD classrooms where they basically coach themselves, which is really interesting because writing is so hard for anyone.

It's been out now for a little while, but when I spent last year writing a book, there are some days you really have to talk yourself into it, and I'm an adult!

How do you teach kids to talk themselves into writing and to get themselves to keep going when it's tough?

Leslie Laud: It's utterly life transformational if you can really get this going because what the teachers tell me right away is they're doing it in every class. They're doing it in math, they're doing at home, they're doing it on the playground, all the time, everywhere.

We start by saying, "What do you say to yourself when you're writing?"

Now for the little ones, they're so teachable, and you can say, "We're going to sweep 'I can't' out of the room, and we're only going to say 'I can,' and they'll do it."

My middle schoolers would say, "Ugh."

I would say to them, "Well, you play basketball. If you stepped out on the court and you said, 'Ugh,' what would coach do? He'd pull you off the floor and wouldn't let you play. Well then why are you going to go into writing an essay with that mindset?"

So they smile, we get their buy-in, but it takes time in coaching. They move faster than adults do.

When we were first trying this out, some of the kids would say to my colleague... She had said, "Oh, I left my bag at home. I'm such an idiot."

They'd say, "That's bad self-talk!" They'd catch her on it, and they catch each other on it.

It utterly changed who I am as a human being because I used to beat myself up in my head, but when I began to really study this and learn that it's not humble, it's not cool. There's no reason to do that, and it's never going to help us perform better.

Anna Geiger: Okay, so let's say someone is writing and they're stuck in a word. They say, "I can't spell this." Is that a time where you do self-talk? And what might you teach them to say instead?

Leslie Laud: 100%, because what's happened is then they freeze cognitively, and then they really can't come up with solutions. So what do we say? It's like in that whole behavior management thing where you don't go in when they're in the red zone and start teaching. You have to teach while they're in the blue zone.

Anna Geiger: Yeah.

Leslie Laud: So you introduce it right from the beginning. Some people start all of these lessons with the self-talk. There's a self-talk lesson in our book, and it comes a little later, but some teachers start with that one.

We create a list on the board. They create lists in their notebook. I start every single day with self-talk. The kids walk in and they know that that's the routine. Okay, sit down, jot down your self-talk, say it to the person next to you.

Anna Geiger: What kind of things do kids say or write down?

Leslie Laud: They write down, "Savage." I had to look that up to make sure that they weren't making fun of me and doing something using a word they shouldn't, but it seemed okay. They write down, "Got this." Hashtags were big for a long time, but "I've got this," seems to be the MVP. It's like a mantra that they just use over and over.

Anna Geiger: Okay.

Leslie Laud: I was in a classroom and a child was stuck. The child called me over and I was about to help, and then the teacher said, "No, no, uh-huh, look up there, Tom." And he looked up at the board and he picked up a self-talk phrase, and then he got himself back into it. I stepped back, and there he was working again.

Anna Geiger: Super cool.

Okay, so one thing I'm wondering about, it sounds like they're responding to literature, but do you have them respond in different genres? Do you have them respond in opinion? Do you have them... Is there any room for fiction writing, poetry, any of that? How does instruction in genres work?

Leslie Laud: Yes. So they write in every genre. The common core separated informative and opinion out from expository.

Anna Geiger: Okay.

Leslie Laud: But opinion writing, especially the common core vision of it, really was expository because it was ground in evidence. We don't separate out those genres as artificially as Common Core had, and what I've heard is the next generation sets of standards will not separate them either.

Anna Geiger: Okay.

Leslie Laud: So as I said earlier, we use TIDE to respond to all of those, but we do teach them. If the question is asking you for your opinion, then you do need to state your opinion. You're going to use more modals, you're going to have a call to action at the end, your evidence is going to be your reasons, and then your detailed analysis is why your reason supports your opinion.

We do a little work on how to respond differently to an opinion question, but we keep TIDE the same because it is just so much easier for kids.

Then we do have a narrative mnemonic called CSPACE, character, setting, problem, action, conclusion, emotion, and the kids use that first to understand stories. We spend a couple of weeks just using that. Every time we read a story, we map it out to CSPACE, and it's just a reading comprehension tool.

Anna Geiger: Okay.

Leslie Laud: But Karen Harris's research found that it was harder for kids to compose stories than it was to compose expository. So we wait so that we can get them really solid with the TIDE and confident, and then we bring this in so that they're already feeling heartened in their ability to write and their ability to write well.

Then poetry, yes, we do, but we just... If we're writing a haiku, we do the same work with understanding the genre that we do initially with understanding the informational text.

Whether it's informational or opinion, there is another lesson again later in the book. There are three more, one on self-regulation, one on revision, and one on understanding genres. We take the genre and we take an essay written in that genre, informative or opinion, and we back map it into an organizer, and then make a list of the genre features.

Anna Geiger: Okay.

Leslie Laud: Then the kids use that as a cheat sheet.

We do the same with narrative. We take a story, we've back mapped a bunch of stories, but now we take a peer-written story, back map it into CSPACE, and then they see the structure.

So if we're going to write haikus or sonnets, we're going to take a sonnet, we're going to back map a few and figure out what the structure is. It's a lifelong skill, because no matter what job kids go into, they're going to have to write and they want to understand the genre and see a model.

Anna Geiger: Right, and that is so overlooked, this idea that the writing that kids do is going to be so front and center when they get a job. Your boss might not hear you read, but they're definitely going to see your writing, right? And that's where we need so much work.

Another question I had was, so you're talking about these different... When you write after the reading, is this always to a prompt? How do kids decide what exactly to write about? If you're reading a story like Chrysanthemum, let's say they read it themselves in first or second grade, how do they decide where to go with that? Do you have a question they're supposed to respond to, or how does that work?

Leslie Laud: I love that question. So in the beginning of the year, we supply the prompts because they may not know what a prompt is, what it looks like, how do you set up a question. So we show them examples of strong, meaty prompts that draw out critical thinking, not summary.

We do a quick summary when we read and we do our gist statement, and then sometimes a bulleted summary. That's all fine, but when we're going to write, we want to see the real critical thinking.

So we model writing to the different reading standards, so identify the point of view. How is the story structured? How do the images help you understand it better? What is the theme? We start off with those in two, info or story writing, but we do move to kids crafting their own prompts and setting their own topic.

I saw a child was writing about human rights and Syrian refugees a couple of years ago, and she crafted a prompt about describe the challenges, and then she poured her heart

into the essay. We actually took her out in the hall and got parent permission to interview her because it was just so good. She said that her grandmother had recently moved to Texas and that she was really empathizing with these kids because they were never even going to see their extended family again. That was what shaped the question that she was asking. But if you read that, you'd have thought it was a personal narrative without the word "I," because so much of her voice was coming through and in her ending call to action.

As another example, there was a child who was going through some struggles, a little older, and he read A Farewell To Arms, and wrote an absolutely mind-blowing essay on a topic that he had come up with that was so incredibly insightful. Again, his voice was so rich through the entire piece that I felt like it achieved more than a personal narrative in him working out psychological issues. He'll say that the book changed his life.

I just want to get a plug in there that kids can craft their own prompts and they can have voice-rich, informative texts and essays. Kids have told me over and over that when they write a personal narrative, they game it because they know if they write something really sad, the teacher's going to give them a better score, so they go in that direction. Whereas if you're doing an informative piece, the same voice can come through, but you're also learning and you're stretching your own perspective.

I used to be all personal narrative, and at first I wanted nothing to do with writing a response to text. Now I'm the other side because I think it's more authentic and richer.

So yes, they do create their own prompts.

Anna Geiger: So I'm going to speak from the devil's advocate side because when I look back at myself as a writing teacher, I was very much Writing Workshop. I think there are some aspects of that which are fine, and someday I'm going to write a blog post about that, but I've definitely looked back and know there was very little explicit instruction. I didn't teach them exactly how to write a sentence. I didn't teach them much about structuring their informative writing. It was a lot of poetry writing and a lot of fantasy writing, that it was really hard to figure out where they were going with it, and a lot of freeform poetry.

I would've probably said to this, in the place that I was at back then, that it sounds like you don't give them a chance to be creative. How can they really write from their heart? Writing from prompts is not... I just would've thought that that was kind of boring and taking agency away from kids. What would you say to someone who has those arguments or concerns?

Leslie Laud: Well, I hear you that I can see the argument for taking agency away when you have prompt-driven writing, but they have to come up with a topic if they're looking at a piece of paper. Even if it's going to be more creative and outside of the box, they still need to generate basically a prompt or a thesis, but a thesis is in response to a prompt.

I do think that there's a place for that kind of writing, but here's where my New York City roots kick in. I grew up in the New York City schools, and I taught in them. These state assessments that measure writing predict prison rates with great precision, and how often is writing a poem a skill that's going to lead to a life of choice.

Now, I do believe in art. My mother's an artist and a poet. My grandfather was a poet. There should be art class, a place for it. And it should be peppered in the curriculum, and we should be finding the kids where that's their leaning, and then that should be cultivated. But we shouldn't be taking away time and opportunity from kids who really do need to develop all the literacy skills like writing. It improves not just reading comprehension, but it improves all of language and just gives us a better shot at everything, all the options that we want in our life.

Anna Geiger: Well, I think too, when I look back at it now, I think I would've said the same thing about the reading teaching that I was doing. I just want them to love to write. To me, you learn to love writing when you're given choice. That's what I thought. That's where it starts. The same thing with a reading workshop approach, you choose your books and you will learn to love reading without...

But we're missing the same thing I was missing with some of my early reading instruction, and that is that you've got to teach them how to do it first, until you're confident in what you're doing.

When I look back, I've always enjoyed writing my whole life, but I remember really, as a senior in high school, my teacher was very structured, and taught us how to write a thesis, and I remember I just felt... I don't know.

Then writing opened up a whole new world for me, and I just loved it even more. I'm sure there were some prompts involved in that, but it was just that he gave me the tools I needed, and then ever after, I still grew as a writer. I look back and I never saw that as a negative. I saw that as, "Wow, now I understand how all this works," and it had never been given to me up until that point.

I love that the kids are getting so much practice with summaries with those gist statements from the very beginning, and the oral language building of it and saying it to a peer is so valuable.

I want to just give a quick summary of thinkSRSD before we talk about a recent cohort study that came out about about what you've learned about its effect in schools. Correct me if I've got any of it wrong.

If someone said to me, "What is SRSD?" I would say SRSD stands for self-regulated strategy development, and there is a professional development company called thinkSRSD, which has added a few elements to it and helps schools implement this approach to writing instruction.

It involves teaching students, assessing student writing, helping them set goals, and teaching them qualities of particular types of genres, doing a lot of modeling, and then practicing with them.

Much of this is done in response to the texts that you're reading to them or that they're reading during their reading program, so any reading program will work. You can tack this on to what you're already doing. It doesn't have to take a lot of time, especially with the gist statements. Those are done daily in five minutes.

This can fit into any classroom K to eight, and teachers can...

We'll get to this later, but there are places where they can go for support to learn how to get started and figure out... Because we've high-leveled it, but how do you do it day by day? We'll get to that.

Did I miss anything?

Oh, yes. We want to, in addition to having kids score their writing and set goals, we also teach them how to encourage themselves and keep going because writing is tough.

Okay, anything else that I missed that are key elements you'd say?

Leslie Laud: I would just tag on to what you just said at the end there and what you talked about earlier about loving writing.

My kids, when I did workshop prior to having learned this, they thought writing was okay. Some of them got stuck and I didn't know what to do to help them. After doing this, I didn't have kids getting stuck. My kids loved writing time. They would cheer. And this is the universal thing that I hear from everybody who's implementing it, like, "Wow, I never knew that writing could be the favorite time of day! It's my favorite time to teach and their favorite time." The kids absolutely love it.

I think you just kind of enlightened me on why that is. When you give them the structure, it sort of liberates.

Anna Geiger: Yeah, and I like what you said too about how the teacher knows how to help, because that was often my challenge. I read all about how to give writing conferences from Lucy Calkins and other writers, and I thought, "Okay, I have to figure out in this moment. What's the one thing that's going to help them move forward?" I didn't always know what it was.

But when you have the shared language and the shared understanding of how writing works and where we're headed and we know what you want to work on this week, there are much fewer questions in that.

I'll admit, there were plenty of times where it was like one o'clock and time for writing, and I was like, okay, I do not have the patience or the energy for this today, so we're going to drop it. But if you know what you're doing, it's way more fun for everyone. So yes, good reminder.

Leslie Laud: So can I just add to that?

Anna Geiger: Yeah.

Leslie Laud: The reason why I think it's so much fun, why it was so fun for me, was because we got past all the pedagogy and all the stuckness, and then we could get into the texts really deeply. What was fun was the learning.

I remember kids saying this before I had even pieced it together.

"Why do you like writing?"

"Because I learn stuff."

We were engaged deeply with the topics and the texts because we had plowed through how to set up the routines and use the structures, so that we could get into it. Then I was dying for writing time. I was eager to explore the texts with my kids.

Anna Geiger: Oh yeah, I love that.

There was a recent retro cohort analysis, and that's when you compare... So you implemented thinkSRSD, and you compared the results to what the previous year's students had had without it. So at the time, the previous year, there was no understanding that they were part of a study. But a year later, you said we're going to compare what this new group of students' scores are compared to this previous group who did not have this approach.

Can you give us an overview of the study and what you learned?

Leslie Laud: Sure. It was the exact same kids. They, in third grade, did not have this. In fourth grade, they did.

Anna Geiger: Gotcha.

Leslie Laud: And so we took the entire school, how they performed in 2017 as a school, 38% proficient, and then how they performed the year after having this. So it was all the exact same kids. Of course, the sixth graders would've moved up and there

would be a new third, but basically it was the entire exact same pool of kids.

Anna Geiger: Okay.

Leslie Laud: So there were no differences among the kids, exact same kids, and minimal teacher turnover from year to year.

Anna Geiger: Okay.

Leslie Laud: So it was the same teachers. As Robert Mitchell, the superintendent of Cumberland used to always say, "They don't get better unless we get better." So it was truly a measure of teacher change, teachers teaching differently, and what that impact was on kids.

We worked with 97 schools over the past 10 years, and we tracked publicly available data. I didn't want there to be any internal data because then you could always say, "But you're the developer." This is all sourced from state education websites.

Anna Geiger: Okay.

Leslie Laud: It was the year before they worked with us and the year after, and we had no competing initiatives. This means we didn't have another literacy initiative happening because we were taking their time. We were taking their PD days in the fall, and then we were taking a day to come back in January, and their faculty meetings over the year. This was the one main initiative.

So we've looked at what are all the factors that could change, but then if you go too deeply into that, you're questioning every randomized control trial that's ever run, because there will always be some factors. You can study them, but basically we hit 97 schools and saw these changes.

On average, our schools go up 7%.

More recently, they've been going up higher, and it's because we've been distilling the professional development, getting it across faster and in a more potent way. We've taken out things like the six stages in order to make it an easier pickup, and then again, we bring those back later on, but we've seen, in the past couple of years, 20, 25% improvement...

Anna Geiger: Wow. Wow.

Leslie Laud: ... in state assessments.

Anna Geiger: So what are those assessments assessing specifically? What's improving?

Leslie Laud: Overall ELA, so it's incredibly distal. A big percentage, I think 33%, of the ELA score comes from the writing, the essays and the short writes.

Anna Geiger: Okay.

Leslie Laud: But 60% or more increases in just the reading. Usually the writing is pulling it up.

Anna Geiger: Yeah, so we know that writing improves many aspects of literacy, in other words. Is there anything else you want to share about that?

Leslie Laud: We were more independent, especially in the past couple of years, just kind of giving the PD, and then stepping back and the schools were running it.

Anna Geiger: Gotcha.

Leslie Laud: Then we're accumulating our own body of evidence, so we have the 97 schools.

I did a paper with Leslie Rogers on a five-year project with a middle school in La Crosse, Wisconsin that's been published. There will be a randomized control trial coming out of Michigan and some researchers there that worked with thinkSRSD. thinkSRSD is developing its own research base as well.

Anna Geiger: So you're finding that this is causing gains even when your team is not in there helping them every step of the day. In other words, teachers can get enough at the beginning to run with this, you're saying?

Leslie Laud: Yes. Yes. They don't need as much mentoring. If you just buy one of the older books, you're going to need a lot more mentoring. If you go with the research model of just SRSD, I've heard that they have to supply a significant amount of mentoring.

Anna Geiger: Okay.

Leslie Laud: But if you're working with thinkSRSD, you're going to need far less mentoring because it's more plug and play. And we have a Facebook group where people are mentoring each other for free. People just dial in and give each other help, especially the newbies who just tried it out will help the brand new newbies.

People are saying, "I'm seeing all these gains." They didn't buy the e-learning. They didn't buy the book. They're just learning it right through the Facebook group, which is incredibly exciting.

Anna Geiger: Well, that's just really interesting to know too, because I remember when I used to promote the writing workshop method, a lot of times I would kind of come to the conclusion that, well, this only works if the teacher is a good writer, if they already know. Because how else would you know what specifically to pick out for a child to work on?

So I would be kind of at a loss for someone who obviously maybe wasn't a natural writer or a practice writer and didn't always know how to pick it out. But thinkSRSD provides that and helps teachers learn what good writing is, which we may not have known ourselves.

Leslie Laud: Yeah, that's so true. Just one more thing on that. You are absolutely right. In our scale up research study, we worked with about 80 schools two years ago within a study. The study didn't end up completing, and we only stayed with eight schools from that. But in any case, I was interacting with thousands of teachers every single week, and I would see that a lot of them didn't know what should go into a paragraph, particularly at grade two and three.

We began to teach the coaches, "You're going to make the exemplars for the year and show them to all the teachers, so that the teachers can see the model each week of what good writing looks like." We have coaches who dug in and actually created these. We've created them for CKLA, and so the teachers can see what good writing looks like every week, because you are spot on, that becomes the biggest factor.

Anna Geiger: It's so interesting. I know people hearing this might be thinking, "Well, I want to try this, but I don't know where to start." You talked about books? I'm not sure what books you're referring to, and also I know there's the Facebook group. But if someone wants to get started, what's their first step? They want to know, they want to see what those first lessons look like, see those mnemonics spelled out. Where do they go?

Leslie Laud: Sure. So we have free starter kits, and I want to clarify that because we're partly federally funded, we're obligated to disseminate for free.

Anna Geiger: Okay.

Leslie Laud: So we're different from a profit or even other nonprofit writing companies in that we are low capacity. We want to see you succeed, and the more successes we have, the more likely we are to get future grants. So we just want this out there for free.

Anna Geiger: You're invested.

Leslie Laud: Yeah, we're invested to see it really take hold across the United States in as many classes as possible. So we have a free starter kit. There's a video at thinkSRSD YouTube, which is a one hour introductory video.

Anna Geiger: I will link to that in the show notes.

Leslie Laud: Okay, great. There are free materials and starter packets available at thinksrsd.com under free resources. Between the two of those, you could get this up and running.

People who are more social go to the Facebook group and just ask, "How do I start?" and people help them.

We have a subsidized e-learning course, which is $199. With that, you get a book called Releasing Writers. It's a manual, so it doesn't really make sense on its own, so you'd want to get the full e-learning. Then there is a second part two book that goes with that called POWeR Up, which is lessons for how to teach all the parts of TIDE, all the parts of CSPACE, and all the processes.

Anna Geiger: These are all eBooks, correct? These are both eBooks?

Leslie Laud: They come in the mail.

Anna Geiger: Oh, okay.

Leslie Laud: Yeah, we have a publisher who sends them out.

Anna Geiger: Okay.

Leslie Laud: And then I'm working on a book right now.

Anna Geiger: Yes, I heard about that! Tell me about it.

Leslie Laud: Yeah, so I'm working on a book on executive functioning and writing.

Anna Geiger: Okay. Okay.

Leslie Laud: I'm very excited because I do believe that executive functioning is the key to all writing. Once you've got your foundational skills, it all boils down to an executive functioning task with self-regulation at the heart, but it's really how do we support and manage executive functioning in how we teach?

Anna Geiger: When might it come out?

Leslie Laud: It's supposed to be due in a month and a half.

Anna Geiger: Oh, goodness.

Leslie Laud: I figure three or four months, maybe by winter.

Anna Geiger: Oh my goodness, I can't wait! Okay, that's so exciting.

All right, I will round all this up and put as much as I can in the show notes for people, maybe kind of a step-by-step, start here, then go here, then go here, because I'm excited to get this out to more teachers too.

Thanks so much for really spelling it all out for us today. This is longer than my normal episodes, by the way, but we'll probably keep it that way because there's a lot in here that's really crucial for teachers to know. Thank you again.

Leslie Laud: Thank you. Thank you for... I hadn't known your background with your rich depth in writing instruction and your command of the research right now. This was really fun to talk about this with you. Thank you.

Anna Geiger: Please be sure to head to the show notes where I have a step-by-step list of things that you can do to get started learning more and implementing thinkSRSD. You can find the show notes at reachallreaders.com/episode182. Talk to you next

time!

Closing: That's all for this episode of Triple R Teaching. For more educational resources, visit Anna at her home base, reachallreaders.com, and join our teaching

episode of Triple R Teaching.