Writing

(see also Digital Literacies)

Writing is not a skill; it's a craft.

Writers are 'moved' to teach, persuade or influence, entertain, paint with words, reflect, to make a record or get something done. Writing, then, is our thoughts, feelings, imaginings, beliefs, values and actions – our lives.

> **In order to develop as writers, children need:**
>
> • teachers who are writers
>
> • experience of a wide range of texts
>
> • opportunities to talk about what they write before, during and after writing
>
> • experience of writing for a range of purposes.

Alongside learning the technicalities and conventions of writing, children need to be given the chance to develop their own decision making about how and what they write.

UKLA supports the view that to develop children as writers, they need to see writing as an act of social meaning making, a creative and communicative act of personal agency and an extension of their identities. Therefore children need opportunities to write for a range of purposes and to set goals for their writing. Purpose and audience include writing for themselves, for a range of readers, in response to real contexts across the curriculum and well beyond it. Children should be given the opportunity to talk about and develop knowledge of the craft of writing and increase their metacognitive and metalinguistic understanding of writing processes. The processes of writing, which often encompass generating ideas, creative experiment, prewriting, drafting, reviewing and revising, editing,

publishing and performing are recursive in nature; writing is neither linear nor sequential. Children need an understanding of the whole process and knowledge about the strategies and techniques involved in negotiating it successfully. Once taught, children should be given increasing agency over their process and be allowed to write at a pace and in a way that best suits them. In addition, a strong sense of writer-identity and the ability to make independent and autonomous choices needs to be nurtured. In this way young authors feel a sense of volition, motivation and self-efficacy in fulfilling their communicative intentions as meaning makers.

Studies have shown that the most effective teachers of writing:

- **balance** the technical and compositional aspects of learning to write;

- **emphasise** writing for pleasure by promoting in children a sense of enjoyment and satisfaction in developing as writers. This includes attention, engagement, challenge and metalinguistics (talk about language features and the craft of writing);

- **prioritise** a richly conceived literacy, helping children to take pride in being part of a community of writers and readers concurrently.

The most effective teachers of writing present it as a meaningful, important and engaging pursuit, where mastery of technique makes a difference to what you say. Finally, there appears to be some evidence indicating that it is important for teachers to identify themselves as writers.

Sources

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Classroom example

Discussing and experimenting with writing styles

A class of 8 and 9 year olds in Dagenham are discussing, experimenting and developing their self-regulation of the writing process. Their writer-teacher has highlighted some common ways in which writers tackle the writing process. These 'writing styles' have been labelled and defined as the following:

Adventurer	Planner	Vomiter	Paragrapher Piler	Sentence Stacker
Likes to write a draft first before looking at it and using it as a plan for a second draft.	Likes to plan in great detail, working out exactly what will be written and where it will go before they begin their draft.	Likes to write their piece out from a plan, before attending to revision and editing.	Likes to write a paragraph, reread it, revise it and edit it before moving on to drafting their next paragraph.	Likes to write a sentence and ensure it is revised and edited just how they want it before moving on to the next sentence.

During personal project writing time, the children have been invited to choose a style they don't usually use and see how it feels. They are then asked what they have learnt from the experience and how their new knowledge might have an impact on their future writing habits. For example, one boy announces that being a Vomiter is actually quite tiring as he has to go through a whole draft and proof-read it all. He finds this frustrating. He has decided in the future to move much more towards a 'Paragraph Piler' mentality - and so ease the burden of editing.

Phil Ferguson and Ross Young on behalf of UKLA

See also

UKLA bookshop   www.ukla.org/shop

Children's Writing Journals by Lynda Graham and Annette Johnson

Active Encounters: Inspiring young readers and writers of non-fiction
by Margaret Mallett

English Language and Literacy 3-19: Writing 3-7 by John Richmond

English Language and Literacy 3-19: Writing 7-16 by John Richmond

Teaching Writing Effectively: Reviewing practice
by Eve Bearne. Liz Chamberlain, Teresa Cremin and Marilyn Mottram

Making an Impact 1: Raising Standards in Writing
by Rebecca Kennedy and Eve Bearne: professional development materials
accompanying *Teaching Writing Effectively*

Teaching Writing: What the Evidence Says
by Henrietta Dombey and colleagues

UKLA website   www.ukla.org/resources

Writing Fact Cards and professional development activities

CLPE Reading and Writing Scales

both on: https://ukla.org/resources/collection/professional-development