

Writing Fact Cards - Professional Development Activities

Teachers as writers

Based on evidence and reliable research, UKLA's free downloadable writing fact cards tell you all that you need to know about writing. You can use them for whole school development or in teacher training to look at the writing curriculum as a whole or to target specific features of writing. These Fact Cards are the perfect starting point for discussion leading to short, medium and long-term plans to develop writing.

Download the Fact Cards from http://www.ukla.org/news/new_ukla_fact_cards_on_teaching_writing/

The following sessions are based on Fact Cards 2 and 4.

Teachers as writers: establishing the environment for writing

You will need several copies of Fact Cards 2 and 4 for this Activity (photocopying is fine) and copies of the 'Writing at Home' chart (see below) or a copy on the IWB.

This session can begin with quite a large group of colleagues sharing ideas but it might then be worth working in smaller groups. To establish common principles across a year group you may want to ask people who teach the same age group to work together or, if you are looking at issues of progression, you may want to have all key stage 1 or 2 teachers working together.

Fact Card 2

Personal experience is a very valuable touchstone when thinking about teaching writing – and being a writing teacher. The idea of 'teachers as writers' can seem daunting but a very quick activity can establish the fact that all teachers are in fact writers. Ask the group to jot down any writing they have done at home over the past few days. They may need reminding that, for example, emails, texts, notes on the kitchen table are 'writing'. Ask them to jot down next to each kind of writing who was going to read it, what the pur-

pose was and what the medium of writing was: pencil and paper, computer, phone.... Show them the chart *Writing at Home* compiled by a teacher, Susanne, from Medway who created the following list over one autumn Saturday and Sunday:

Writing at Home

<i>Form of text</i>	<i>Audience</i>	<i>Purpose</i>	<i>Medium</i>
Text messages	Her children	To confirm times and arrangements	Mobile phone texts with emoticons
Emails	Friends	To stay in touch	Blackberry
Emails	Family	To reply to an invitation	Computer
Emails	Work colleagues	To send and request information	Computer
List	Herself and her husband	To remember all the shopping	Scrap paper and biro
Note and signature	A friend	To offer birthday greetings	Pen and card
Note	Herself	To record website details from a newspaper	Post-it note and biro
List of jobs for the weekend	Herself	To be an aide memoire	Notebook and pen
Doodling	Herself	As form of relaxation/ thinking during a phone call	Pen and back of envelope
Parental permission record	Secondary school	To record her approval for a school trip	Pen and school form
Postcodes	Multimap	To search for directions	Word processing
Formal Letter	Local Council offices	To complain and request a refund	Computer and hand written signature
Noting phone numbers off the answer phone	Her family	To create a record	Pen and scrap paper
School planning document	Literacy co-ordinator and self	To record literacy plans	Computer
Comments and marks	Children in her class	To assess work and offer feedback	Pen on children's work and stickers

(from the UKLA book *Teaching Writing Effectively: Reviewing practice*, page 8)

Working in pairs or threes, ask the group to share a memory of a time, perhaps when they were at school, when they felt proud of a piece of writing. What made them proud? Now ask them to think of a time (they don't need to share this experience unless they want to) when someone made them feel bad about a piece of writing.

How do these reflections relate to the points on Fact Card 2:

- When have they demonstrated writerly behaviour or shared compositional challenges?
- How do their personal experiences impact their role as writing teachers?
- How do they see their writing identity?

The group will need to mull over their thoughts after this session. Make plans to meet again soon to identify how their insights can be built into classroom practice to support writing. For example:

- Teachers/TAs/helpers all have an English book which is the same as the children's with name/class on front. And all adults in the room write at the same time as the children.
- Developing peer marking by the children.
- Discussing feelings/thoughts when writing.
- Creating a display of a real writing process with photos and comments by the children and adults.

Fact Card 4

A good starting point for developing choice and independence in writing is to discover the perceptions about writing of children in their classes. They could ask the children to jot down times when they have felt positive about their writing. Can they remember/talk about the piece of writing? What helped them feel like that?

In a group, children draw an outline of a child. Inside they note feelings about writing; outside, they note conditions for learning – what makes writing easier?

From these contributions, the class can gather common points to make a display of 'Our comfortable writing points', for example:

- time of day
- music playing
- sit where we want
- range of pencils/pens
- water available
- time to finish
- time to think ...

The teacher can then plan to discuss and develop these suggestions over an agreed space of time and to note what differences it makes to children's assurance and achievements as writers.

There is also useful chapter on children's perceptions of themselves as writers in the UKLA book Teaching Writing Effectively: Reviewing practice.

Specially for trainees – reflective practice

Becoming a writing teacher

You can do this individually, but it's always a good idea to work with others to get discussion going and to share ideas about where to go to find out more.

Carry out the activities for Fact Card 2 and note how you might demonstrate writerly behaviour and share compositional challenges on your next school placement.

If possible, carry out the activities suggested for Fact Card 4 with a group of children and consider the implications for your classroom practice.

As well as the references listed on the UKLA website on: http://www.ukla.org/news/new_ukla_fact_cards_on_teaching_writing/ there are lots of good ideas and suggestions in the UKLA book *Teaching Writing Effectively: Reviewing practice* to help you move towards being a writing teacher and to survey children's perceptions of themselves as writers.