

Writing Fact Cards - Professional Development Activities

Working with stories

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/

This session is based on Fact Card 5.

Suggestions are made for further reading to support planning for development.

Working with stories

You will need several copies of Fact Card 5 for this Activity (photocopying is fine), a large sheet of paper for notes and the planning for the next unit of work.

It's always worth talking through what a group of staff or know themselves before looking to 'fill the gaps'. To establish common principles 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.

Ask colleagues in groups of two or three briefly to tell each other about a really enjoyable reading experience as a child. It might have been when someone read a book to them or when they first came across a particular author. What made the experience special? Did it have any effect on them as writers? There may not have been a specific effect but re-

search has shown that reading - and being read to - considerably strengthen children's writing by providing models for writing.

What about the effect of reading on the children's writing? Still in small groups, tell each other about one recent example of a shared reading experience helping to improve the children's writing. What effect did it have? Better structure? More adventurous language? Realistic dialogue? Why did this text work? What did each teacher/ trainee do to make it effective? Using the three bullet points on the Fact Card, create a list of successful strategies for using reading as a model for writing.

Year Group	Title of Book	Successful strategies for reading into writing

In year teams, look at the planning for the next unit of work. Is the writing firmly based on the planned story (ies)? Add ideas to develop using reading: as models for story structure; as a stimulus for ideas for writing; as a basis for discussing language and style.

Still in year teams, discuss any difficulties in using literature as a springboard for writing. Sometimes the length of a text can mean that 'getting through it' becomes the priority rather than discussing the meaning or how the author has created characterisation or atmosphere. Or there just doesn't seem to be enough time to spend reading to the class or discussing ideas before writing. Ask two year groups (ideally Years 1 and 2; Years 3 and 4; Years 5 and 6) to share their discussions with each other, and come up with one recommendation to help overcome a particular obstacle.

Senior managers will want to take note of the suggestions in order to plan for future development. Ask each pairing to identify one recommendation and make plans to develop it, considering:

Who will lead the development?

When should plans for action be ready?

Who will be involved?

What actions might be taken?

What will be the overall timescale of the development (possibly a term)?

What support/ resources will be necessary?

How will success be evaluated?

There is sound research evidence to suggest that when teachers are avid and committed readers (of any kind of text) their classes become equally keen to read (http://www.ukla.org/downloads/teachers_as_readers.pdf.)

UKLA's book *Building Communities of Readers* also has many suggestions about developing a reading environment in the school and classroom.

The UKLA website has a Resources section with plenty of suggestions for good classroom practice with children's literature.

Specially for trainees – reflective practice

To pinpoint what you know and what you'd like to find out more about:

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. Using Fact Card 5 discuss ways you have observed teachers using children's texts as models for children's writing. Start gathering ideas, and add to them from your own discussions, about how you could build on reading to:

- get ideas going for children's own stories
- develop story structure
- explore an author's use of language and style.

There are plenty of practical resources on the UKLA website and for more research into the area, as well as the references listed on the UKLA website on: http://www.ukla.org/news/new_ukla_fact_cards_on_teaching_writing/ you'll find the UKLA journal *Literacy* very useful for accessible research based on practice.