# Teaching Writing in Years 7 and 8
## Accelerating Progress

## Contents

## Introduction

At level 4, students need to confidently and independently use a wide range of writing strategies and skills to meet the demands of specific learning tasks across the curriculum. This resource is designed to support you to accelerate the writing achievement of your year 7 and 8 students so that they can meet these demands. You can read the whole document in sequence, or you can skim it and choose relevant parts to read in detail.

This resource's first section, on planning and organising for writing, is followed by sections that cover the six dimensions of effective literacy practice. Each section includes reflective questions for teachers.

**Please note:** This resource emphasises teaching students the knowledge and skills required for using writing as a tool across the curriculum.  It assumes that constrained skills are in place and that students have control over basic spelling, punctuation and grammar conventions. It does not provide suggestions for dealing with these needs. For more information about supporting students with spelling, punctuation, grammar and vocabulary, refer to **http://soundsandwords.tki.org.nz/**
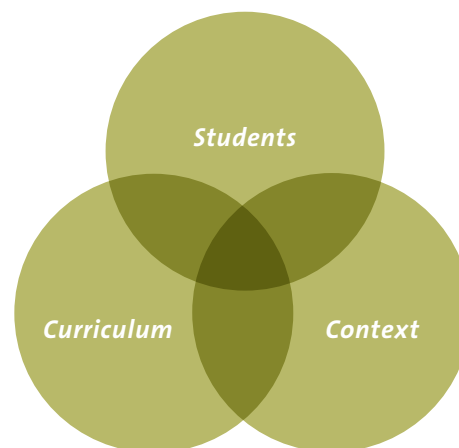
# *Planning and Organisation*

Consider the culture, identity, and language knowledge and experiences your students bring to all learning situations. People in the community, including local iwi and whānau, are valuable sources of information. As much as possible, and where appropriate, consult with them during planning and teaching activities to ensure that learning contexts are rich and authentic for your students – and that you have the knowledge to help them access and make use of their prior knowledge in their learning.

## *Three aspects of planning*

There are three aspects of planning to consider:

- the big ideas that underpin the New Zealand Curriculum and the big ideas contained in the specific learning area of your focus

- the relevance of the topics and contexts for your students

- the learning strengths and needs of your students.

These three aspects (curriculum, context, and the students' learning strengths and needs) are integral and reciprocal. They naturally overlap, and learning tasks and activities address each aspect. It is the point where the planning starts that may vary. For example:

Students

Curriculum

Context

**English curriculum:** *I know that I need to make sure all my students have developed the knowledge and skills to create a variety of texts, and I want to show them the difference between a scientific description and a poetic description. We will compare texts and write our own texts, developing deliberate choice of language depending on purpose.*

**Science curriculum:** *My students need to be able to explain how living things respond to environmental changes. I want to use an example of a sudden change that led to some really destructive results.*

**Learning strengths and needs:** *These students have a good understanding of what ideas to include in their scientific writing, but they need to organise them more effectively. I will need to design lessons around structure, including paragraphs.*

**Relevant context:** *There's been an international disaster of significance – an oil spill – what relevant learning tasks can I design around this global event that will interest and challenge my students?*

For more information and support for teaching writing in English and social sciences contexts, go to http://literacyonline.tki.org.nz/Literacy-Online/Pedagogy/Writing-hub/Teacher-support-materials

Whatever the starting point, it's important that you address any relevant aspects of writing in your lesson design. If your students are to improve their writing, they need to practise what they have learned and to transfer it to a variety of writing tasks. Provide opportunities every day and throughout the day for your students to think about, record, and communicate experiences, ideas, and information to meet specific learning purposes across the curriculum (as in the writing standard below). This may include jottings, notes, a "quick write", or a crafted piece.

## Day-to-day planning

Writing in the classroom does not happen only at "writing time". Provide opportunities throughout the day for your students to use writing in various ways.

| Timetable | Learning context | Teacher talk – expectations | Form of writing |
|---|---|---|---|
| Block 1 | Literacy – English | We have been learning how important it is to choose precise language to describe an art work.<br><br>Those of you who have finished describing the Lichtenstein work can be reading about the technique he used. You will need to summarise what you have read.<br><br>Some of you will be selecting your own topic to write on. I'd like you to think about the descriptions you will need to include in that.<br><br>I will work with this group – we are learning to extend our sentences. | • Factual description of an art work<br>• Summary of main points from research and reading about Lichtenstein's techniques<br>• Plan for writing about own selected topic |
| Block 2 | Literacy – Library<br><br>Maths | Bring your notebooks to the library. You will be jotting some thoughts about the great novel we are reading.<br><br><br>Record your findings in your maths books. | • Responses to literature in note form – bullet points, phrases, and questions<br>• Paragraph explaining own process for solving maths problems |
| Block 3 | Technology | We need to describe how this works. First, list all the components, and then we'll plan together what we need to say about the working parts. | • List of components<br>• Writing plan prioritising sequence of steps |
| Block 4 | Inquiry topic – focus on the arts | We have discussed the impact of this piece and what it makes us think of. We will record those thoughts in one paragraph. I'll give you about ten minutes. | • "Quick-write" paragraph describing personal responses to an art work |
| End of day | Preparation for tomorrow's learning | Bring your notebooks to the circle. When you get home tonight, choose one room where you like to spend time. You will be describing this room tomorrow. Make some notes on what you notice. You can sketch the room if you want. | • Words and phrases organised under categories in a graphic organiser |

## ? Questions for the teacher

- Have I considered:
  - the big ideas of the curriculum?
  - topics and contexts that link to the big ideas?
  - the needs of my students?
- Do I make the most of opportunities for writing throughout the day?

# Expectations: Curriculum Demands

*The New Zealand Curriculum Reading and Writing Standards for Years 1–8* states that:

- by the end of year 7, students will create texts to meet the writing demands of the New Zealand Curriculum as they work towards level 4

- by the end of year 8, students will create texts to meet the writing demands of the New Zealand Curriculum at level 4.

The text and task demands of the curriculum are similar for students in year 7 and year 8. The difference in the standard for year 8 is the students' increased accuracy and fluency in writing a variety of texts across the curriculum, their level of control and independence in selecting writing processes and strategies, and the range of texts they write. In particular, by the end of year 8, students need to be confidently and deliberately choosing the most appropriate processes and strategies for writing in different learning areas. To gain a deeper understanding of the expectations for students at years 7 and 8, go to: **http://nzcurriculum.tki.org.nz/National-Standards/Reading-and-writing-standards/The-standards**

The National Standards illustrations display the skills, knowledge, and attitudes demonstrated by students at various year levels as they meet the writing demands of a particular curriculum task. To develop your understanding of the expectations for different year levels, go to: **http://literacyonline.tki.org.nz/Literacy-Online/Student-needs/National-Standards-Reading-and-Writing/National-Standards-illustrations**

*The Literacy Learning Progressions* details the skills, knowledge, and attitudes your students need to acquire by the end of each year level. To develop your understanding of the progressions, go to: **http://www.literacyprogressions.tki.org.nz**

## Understand the relevant curriculum and literacy expectations for all students

Use *The Literacy Learning Progressions* to gain a thorough knowledge of what your students need to know and be able to do by the end of year 8.

Identify the writing demands across the curriculum (in relation to the topics and themes you have planned for your students), possible challenges those demands might present, and the knowledge and skills that students need to meet them. Challenges could include the characteristics of the texts themselves, the complexity of the tasks, the big ideas the students are exploring and synthesising through their writing, and the gap between what the students know now and what they need to learn. For English language learners, you will need to think carefully about contexts for writing. Choose writing opportunities that build on English language learners' strengths and knowledge.

Refer to Building Science Concepts for more background information about science concepts and their development across the curriculum. **http://scienceonline.tki.org.nz/What-do-my-students-need-to-learn/Building-Science-Concepts**

Refer to Building Conceptual Understandings in social sciences for information and examples to support planning and inquiry-based teaching in social sciences contexts. **http://ssol.tki.org.nz/social_studies_years_1_1o/teaching_and_learning/effective_teaching_in_social_studies/building_conceptual_understandings**

## *Example: Student writing at the expected level in year 8*

### *Curriculum learning area: The arts (visual arts, Communicating and Interpreting)*

The students in a year 7–8 class were exploring the work of twentieth-century pop artists. The purpose was to interpret what the artists were trying to do and then develop their own art works in a similar style. The students looked closely at works by Roy Lichtenstein. They were encouraged to discuss their own response to the works as well as what others had to say about them.

For one writing task, the students were asked to provide brief background details about the artist, to use precise language to describe a selected art work, and to give their personal response to it. The students read some brief art reviews as models. The teacher and the students agreed on what the writing should specifically include for their audience (that is, for someone interested in finding out about this painting) and worked together to notice and annotate the relevant features.

### *Task*

### *WHAAM! by Roy Lichtenstein.*

Write two or three sentences about the artist's background and why the painting was in the gallery.

Describe the painting using precise language and say what you think about the painting. Organise your ideas and information into paragraphs.

(Note: *WHAAM!,* one of Lichtenstein's most famous art works, consists of two large panels depicting a fighter aircraft firing a rocket into an enemy plane. The enemy plane is enveloped in a bright red and yellow explosion. The painting is an adaptation of a comic-book panel, drawn in cartoon style with lettering and a caption. To view the painting, go to: http://www.lichtensteinfoundation.org/whaam.htm)

| *Teacher feedback* | *Example of student's writing* |
|---|---|
| You have included enough detail about the artist for this piece. | Roy Lichtenstein: *WHAAM!* |
| | Roy Lichtenstein was an American artist who was born in 1923 and died in 1997. He became well known for his art works, which looked like comic strips. Many of his paintings were very large. One of his most famous, *WHAAM!* measures 1727 mm by 4064 mm. That is more than 4 metres wide. The original is on display at the Tate Modern art gallery in London as it would be much too big to be on a lounge wall. The first thing you notice about the painting (after its size, if you are lucky enough to see the real one) is the word WHAAM!, which is written exactly as it would be written in a comic strip. The colours of the lettering and the aeroplane are bold, but the background is quite pale. |
| Is that the main reason *WHAAM!* is in the gallery? | |
| You have mentioned what you noticed about size, colour, and features. Would this be a good place for a paragraph break? | |
| You have included the details we decided on, such as precise language, exact detail, present tense, and specific vocabulary. | This makes the main features of the art work stand out. There are more words used, which look like a speech bubble in a comic. The artist has used capital letters, like comic strips do. The words say "I pressed the fire control ... and ahead of me rockets blazed through the sky ..." which is being said by the pilot of the aeroplane. I like this art work because of the boldness. It has got something serious in it, but it is painted in a way that makes people think it's just fun. |
| Next time we will think about the structure, and where we need to paragraph, to organise the information. | |

Note: For English language learners, a writing frame of an art review would support their success with the task. An English language learner might also draw on prior knowledge of an artist from another culture to describe an art work. For examples of writing frames and more suggestions for ways that you can support English language learners, go to: http://esolonline.tki.org.nz

## ? *Question for the teacher*

• Am I designing lessons, tasks, and activities that are appropriate to what my students know now and what they need to learn?

## *Identify writing demands*

To meet the demands of the curriculum, and to become increasingly independent in choosing the appropriate purpose and form, your students will need to know how to write a variety of texts and be able to use the range of structures and features required to do so.

This includes writing to think about, record, and communicate experiences, ideas, and information. Much of students' writing at this level is not formal and does not belong to a particular text type. Their writing can take a variety of forms according to the curriculum context and task. Writing to clarify and organise thinking has an important function for students in years 7 and 8 as they encounter more complex ideas and content in different learning areas.

English language learners work towards the same outcomes as students who are native speakers of English. However, identifying the demands for these students requires a slightly different emphasis. For these students, you need to pay particular attention to identifying the following aspects of the specific texts they need to create:

- vocabulary
- cohesive devices
- phrase, clause, and sentence structures
- features of text types
- tone and register
- embedded cultural knowledge.

When identifying the writing demands of learning activities, assess whether the students can currently achieve them. Plan lessons to address any needs you identify. Be clear about precisely what your students need to learn in order to fulfil the writing demands. For example, your students may need to: use topic-specific or academic vocabulary; record specific information; organise notes; explain their own or others' thinking; describe a phenomenon; or analyse an aspect of a text they have read or heard.

Writing frames and graphic organisers are useful ways of supporting the writing of English language learners. They need explicit instruction in the areas listed above – including modelling (exploring models), explaining, and discussing – as well as many opportunities for repetition and scaffolded practice. They also need opportunities to build on the cultural and linguistic knowledge they already have, including the chance to use their first language and develop their literacy in it. To be able to complete a particular writing task successfully, some students will need specific instruction in the academic language required in a topic. For more information about specific strategies to support your English language learners, go to **http://esolonline.tki.org.nz/ESOL-Online/Teacher-needs/Pedagogy**

# *Plan writing activities for the curriculum*

Build your understanding of the many purposes for writing that support the students' learning across the curriculum. The following table gives useful ideas for planning writing tasks.

## *Examples of writing purposes and tasks across curriculum contexts*

| Learning area | Purposes for talking, reading, and writing (level 4) | Writing tasks |
|---|---|---|
| English | • Appreciate and enjoy texts<br>• Deconstruct texts<br>• Study New Zealand and world literature<br>• Create a range of texts | • Poetic descriptions: describing a character, a scene, or an event<br>• Personal memoirs<br>• Literary essays<br>• Expository essays<br>• Narratives |
| The arts | • Explore and describe<br>• Describe and record<br>• Reflect | • Descriptions of art works, performances<br>• Explanations of techniques<br>• Personal reflections – expressive |
| Health and physical education | • Describe<br>• Access and use information<br>• Identify and describe<br>• Investigate and describe | • Factual descriptions<br>• Personal reflections – expressive<br>• Lists, summaries<br>• Procedures, instructions<br>• Descriptions of processes and functions |
| Mathematics and statistics | • Use graphs, tables, and rules to describe<br>• Interpret and use scales, timetables, and charts<br>• Plan and conduct investigations<br>• Communicate findings | • Lists<br>• Statements<br>• Plans<br>• Explanations of findings and theories |
| Science | • Identify<br>• Explore<br>• Explain<br>• Ask questions<br>• Find evidence<br>• Investigate<br>• Use a range of scientific symbols, conventions, and vocabulary<br>• Describe<br>• Identify and describe<br>• Compare<br>• Relate | • Personal responses, reflections records of findings – factual, crafted as reports<br>• Explanations<br>• Factual descriptions<br>• Semantic grids/tables, for comparisons<br>• Naming<br>• Labelling<br>• Using metaphor to explain or make analogies |

| Learning area | Purposes for talking, reading, and writing (level 4) | Writing tasks |
|---|---|---|
| Social sciences | • Ask questions<br>• Gather information<br>• Examine issues<br>• Explore and analyse<br>• Consider<br>• Reflect<br>• Evaluate | • Personal responses, reflections – expressive<br>• Explanations of social phenomena<br>• Persuasive essays<br>• Questions for inquiry<br>• Interviews<br>• Conclusions |
| Technology | • Plan<br>• Review<br>• Explore<br>• Justify<br>• Describe<br>• Investigate | • Plans and reviews<br>• Evaluations<br>• Factual descriptions<br>• Explanations<br>• Predictions and personal responses to findings |

For more on purposes for writing across the curriculum, see The New Zealand Curriculum Exemplars: English: Purposes and Text Forms at:

www.tki.org.nz/r/assessment/exemplars/eng/teachers_notes/written_lang_e.php

Also, the online illustrations that support the writing standards provide useful examples of tasks and the texts students create in relation to demands across a variety of curriculum contexts. http://literacyonline. tki.org.nz/Literacy-Online/Student-needs/National-Standards-Reading-and-Writing/National-Standards-illustrations

## *Example: Supporting students to learn the features of text forms they are expected to use across the curriculum*

*Unit of study: Cause and effect of events: Understanding that events have causes and effects (social studies [and science], level 4: context – a volcanic ash cloud)*

The class is exploring the causes of a volcanic ash cloud in order to go on and examine its effects on the local and world community. The teacher and students have identified a variety of purposes for writing, including to explain the causes and effects to readers. Through questions, the teacher has found out that some students are unclear about the structure and features of a scientific explanation. In planning her teaching, the teacher refers to *The Literacy Learning Progressions* to find the exact skills, knowledge, and strategies the students need to be able to use in order to explain the concept of volcanic ash. For example, she identifies that the students at this level:

- create content that is concise and relevant to the curriculum task, often including carefully selected detail and/or comment that supports or elaborates on the main points

- deliberately choose a clear and logical text structure to suit their purpose and audience, sometimes innovating to achieve this.

*The Literacy Learning Progressions, end of year 8 (writing)*

The teacher then sources various models of scientific explanations and shares them with a group of students. Through supported reading and strategic questioning, the teacher co-constructs, with the students, the following criteria for an effective explanation:

- It has a title that shows what you are explaining.

- It starts with a general statement to introduce the topic being explained. (For example, "Volcanic ash consists of small jagged pieces of rock, minerals, and volcanic glass blasted into the air by a volcano.")

- The steps or phases in a process are explained logically and in order. (For example, "Volcanic eruptions produce steam, water, ash, and rock.")

- It's written in the simple present tense. (For example, "Volcanic activity is triggered by ...".)

- It uses temporal connectives. (For example, "first", "then", "after that", "finally".)

- It uses causal connectives. (For example, "so", "because of this". "Volcanic eruptions can be extremely damaging to the environment, particularly because of ...")

- It includes verbs that describe processes. (For example, "produce", "emit", "form".)

- It uses the passive voice when we need to know what happened but not necessarily who made it happen. (For example, "Gases are produced ...".)

The teacher records the criteria for success and then provides a copy for the students to use as a checklist when they draft their ideas.

## *Expect all your students to learn*

Have the highest expectations of your students – what you say and do has an impact. Your students will respond positively to comments such as "I can see that you are well on the way to writing an effective report. I know that by the end of the week you will be able to include effective links between all of your paragraphs."

When supporting your students to become confident and capable writers across the curriculum, expect them to reflect on their own writing and monitor their own progress. Provide opportunities for them to do this.

## ❓ *Questions for the teacher*

- Do I know what the writing demands of all the curriculum learning areas at my students' levels are?

- Do I know what I need to teach so that my students can meet the writing demands across the curriculum?

- Do I have high expectations for all my students?

# Knowledge of the Learner and Partnerships

Get to know your students by:

- finding out what they know and what they need to learn, through assessment, observation, and interaction
- developing and maintaining effective learning partnerships with them.

Identify where your students are (what they know) and where they need to be (what they need to learn). For information about the writing demands of the curriculum, refer to the "Expectations" section on page XXX.

Be aware that English language learners in years 7 and 8 may be literate in another language. Find ways to build on this, such as allowing the students to write in their own language and to talk about what they have written in English. Refer to the Ministry of Education DVD *Making Language and Learning Work 3: Integrating Language and Learning in Years 5 to 8* for ideas on how you can integrate content area learning and language learning.

## *Identify needs*

Find out what your students already know about writing and what they need to learn, through regularly monitoring their draft writing books, noticing how they respond to both written and oral feedback. (Ensure that the written feedback you give to students is specific. For example, "You have used paragraphs and made the breaks at the right places. Next time, we'll talk about linking the ideas between those paragraphs.")

## *Monitor students' writing*

Your students' writing books, draft books, and notebooks provide valuable data about their progress and development as writers.

Their writing across all learning areas should show:

- mileage – students improve their writing by writing often
- variety – students need to create a range of texts for various purposes and in various forms (Beginning writers must develop an understanding that all writing is for a specific purpose.)
- evidence of self-editing and proofreading – students need to know that part of the writing process includes checking and adjusting as they write (Through the use of online documents, you can look at your students' changes in each revision, give feedback, and ask questions about their decision making.)
- evidence of responding to feedback – students' draft writing should show signs of an ongoing partnership between the writer and the teacher, peers, and whānau, with feedback and next steps described
- evidence of using models of text – beginning writers of all ages will learn about writing by exploring the writing of others and having a go themselves. (Glue models of text into the students' books. They can be directed back to the models from time to time to explore them with a different learning focus. Models are particularly important for English language learners. Help your students to use the models to explore examples of vocabulary, different types of phrases and clauses, sentence structure, cohesion [linking ideas between sentences and paragraphs], and text structure.)

It is helpful to meet regularly with teaching colleagues to discuss students' writing, the monitoring of their progress, and the effect of teaching. This develops a collective responsibility for students' learning and provides a collaborative inquiry into students' needs and planning decisions to address these. It also ensures ongoing moderation and understanding of appropriate expectations for students. Over time, these discussions provide rich opportunities for professional development in writing. When reviewing students' writing, use *The Literacy Learning Progressions* as well as progress indicators from the writing exemplars **http://assessment.tki.org.nz/Assessment-tools-resources/The-New-Zealand-Curriculum-Exemplars** to support your decisions. Also refer to *The English Language Learning Progressions* when reviewing and discussing the writing of English language learners. The online illustrations for the writing standards may also be useful for identifying appropriate writing knowledge and skills for particular curriculum tasks (see http://literacyonline.tki.org.nz/Literacy-Online/Student-needs/National-Standards-Reading-and-Writing/National-Standards-illustrations)

The draft writing sample on the following page includes effective feedback.

## A draft writing sample

**Purpose for writing: To explain a natural phenomenon that is an iconic landmark**

Curriculum context: Science – Material World

The following criteria were co-constructed to support the students in writing their explanations.

- Provide the necessary information for the reader to understand the concept.
- Use specific scientific language to explain the phenomenon.
- Use a variety of sentence structures to make the writing interesting.
- Provide examples to illustrate key points.



> Why is Ayers Rock red?
>
> [Remember the analyses we did on our sample pamphlets about how to engage the reader in the opening paragraph. Does your paragraph do this?]
>
> Ayers Rock is the one of the most famous rocks in the world. It is 348m high and 9.4 km in curcumference.
>
> Ayers Rock appears to glow during sunrise and sunset, because the sandstone has mineral like feldspar in it that reflects the red light but absorbs all the other light. During the day its red
>
> [Great to see you using scientific terms. Can you add more detail to help the reader understand oxidisation?]
>
> because the minerals in the rock are oxdisied.

This draft writing sample shows:

- understanding of purpose and audience (plus feedback to improve this)
- language resources developing, such as use of precise verbs ("appears", "absorbs", "reflects") and use of the explaining language "because … (reason given)"
- a variety of sentences, including a long complex sentence
- understanding of the use of technical and topic-specific vocabulary for factual writing.

Use appropriate assessment tools, such as an e-asTTle writing assessment that has been marked, moderated, and levelled, to find out about your students' generic writing competence. Use such normed assessments with students' day-to-day writing for a range of tasks and purposes across the curriculum to obtain a rich picture of your students' strengths and needs as writers and to inform your planning and teaching decisions. For more information about e-asTTle, go to **http://e-asttle.tki.org.nz/**

## Set broad achievement goals

Use *The New Zealand Curriculum Reading and Writing Standards for Years 1–8* to set achievement goals for where your students need to be by the end of the year. Share examples of the sorts of text they need to read and write in order to be at the appropriate standard. The online illustrations for reading and writing are a good place to start. These goals will be based on the demands of the curriculum. Tools such as asTTle will help you to identify progress within and between curriculum levels. *The Literacy Learning Progressions* (at the appropriate year level) or *The English Language Learning Progressions* provide the detail for what your students need to learn and be able to do. They also give good guidance about what you need to teach. Consider the opportunities you have within your programme to gather evidence about your students' progress over time.

## Nothing is a secret

Sharing assessment information with your students will make explicit what they can do well and what they need to work on. The specific language that you use in your classroom when you are talking about texts, in both reading and writing settings, will help them to understand what aspects of writing they are focusing on. You will need to unpack some of the assessment information for them. For example, you will probably need to explain their asTTle scores. "You have scored an R4 for structure and language. I think you could aim to be moving to R5 by the end of the year. Let's have a look at the rubric so that you understand the sort of things that structure and language include. Then we can come up with a goal that you can be working on for the next few weeks."

## Help students to develop specific goals

A specific goal for a student may be broad – for example, learning to use paragraphs in order to organise ideas and information more clearly, learning to use complex sentences in order to provide supporting detail and information, or learning to write persuasively. However, there will also be opportunities for achieving focused, short-term goals, such as the "next steps" that you may record in your students' draft writing.

### *Developing students' awareness by focusing their learning goals*

I am learning to consider and discuss:

- my purpose for writing
- who I am writing for
- what I want to write about
- the best form to get my message across.

I am learning to:

- consider each sentence as I write
- use dictionaries and a thesaurus to help me find words I need
- identify the most effective words and phrases to use so that my writing has an impact on the audience
- select precise words to make my meaning clear
- check my work with a partner.

See the table on page 17 for examples of how teachers might plan for deliberate acts of teaching (instructional strategies) to help the students meet these learning goals.

## ? Questions for the teacher

- What information do I have about my students?
- How will I use this information to inform my planning?

## *Encourage students' decision making*

One way that you can build partnerships with your students is to give them choices in writing. Allow them to make some decisions about the form, the purpose, and the topic of texts they create. They need to be able to write spontaneously (on a multitude of topics) as well as to work a piece of writing into a deliberate, crafted piece with a specific purpose.

## *Talk with your students*

Effective teachers of writing know their students well and build relationships as a basis for learning partnerships. Provide a mutually respectful environment in your classroom so that your students feel comfortable about expressing their thoughts when talking and in writing. Be sincere in your response to your students' ideas. Students can tell when a teacher is actually interested in what they have to say and write, irrespective of whether their text is about something from their own lives or is a response to learning in the classroom. Make an effort to ask questions about students' experiences outside the classroom.

"Morning, Tuili. How's that pup you've got at home?"

(This question acknowledges the student's home life. The teacher might link this to learning, for example, "You could explain what you have to do to look after it when we are writing about caring for pets this morning.")

"Mikey, I hear you got 'player of the day' on Saturday – well done! Tell me about the game."

(This comment acknowledges the student's achievements outside of school and shows interest in hearing more. The teacher could link this to learning, for example, "That would be a great topic for your personal writing.")

"Shakala, I noticed that you were having a hard time with that maths problem yesterday. I can help you go through it now, before the bell goes."

(This suggestion acknowledges a learning need and affirms the supporting role of the teacher.)

Use your knowledge of your students' diverse experiences to help them make connections to new learning. For example:

"Simi, how does your family in Tonga raise funds for community projects? Tell me ... /Write about ..."

"Jong, how do the buildings in our city compare with those you have seen in Bangkok? Tell me ... / Write about ..."

For more information about knowing your students and building learning partnerships, see Knowledge of the Learner (chapter 3) and Partnerships (chapter 7) in *Effective Literacy Practice in Years 5 to 8*.

## ❓ *Questions for the teacher*

- Do I make time to relate to my students, not just as part of the class but as individuals?
- Knowing that my words have an impact, do I take care with the way I speak to my students?
- Am I giving my students opportunities to make some of their own decisions in their learning and their writing?

# Knowledge of Literacy Learning across the Curriculum and Engaging Learners with Texts

It's important to become secure in your own knowledge of language and the way it's put together so that you can accelerate the writing progress of your students across the curriculum. You have to be able to recognise effective writing in published texts and in your students' work. You also need to be able to identify the characteristic features of the various forms of text that your students will need to write as they work towards meeting the demands of the New Zealand Curriculum.

## Improve your knowledge of language and text types

Work collaboratively with other teachers to identify the writing opportunities and challenges that students come across as they write in the context of a particular inquiry or topic study.

Collect and share text models that you think you will be able to use in some way with your students. Include a variety of topics, types, and forms (such as poems, stories, descriptions, reports, letters, and advertisements) from a variety of sources (such as novels, magazines, the *School Journal*, textbooks, and anthologies).

Develop expertise in analysing these models by engaging in regular discussion with other teachers and by practising. It's useful to develop a system where a school's teachers regularly select a model of text and share it with colleagues, supporting one another to identify the features.

Build on your knowledge of what the process of writing involves and plan lessons appropriately so that students can:

- plan for writing (sometimes by thinking or talking) and decide what they want to communicate
- choose the best words to say what they mean in their writing
- check that their writing makes sense and says what they wanted it to say
- check that they have made their best attempt at correct spelling and punctuation.

Find out what you need to know about creating texts by reflecting on what others do when they write. This includes reading and reflecting on teachers' writing, on students' writing, and on texts by published authors.

## Engage your learners with texts by discussing texts in reading and writing

Use the correct language when discussing texts with your students. Include the terms "purpose and audience", "content and ideas", "structure", and "language features". Use these terms when discussing both reading and writing so that you make the links explicit.

Practise discussing texts from a reader's perspective and a writer's perspective. For example:

**Text purposes and audiences**

- Reader: The purpose of this text is to persuade.
- Writer: I need to persuade my readers (audience).

**Ideas within texts**

- Reader: I understand what the writer is saying. The meaning is clear.
- Writer: I need to choose the right words to convey the right meaning to my audience.

**Language features**

- Reader: The writer has used specific features that enhance the meaning.
- Writer: I need to use the features of (for example, persuasive) texts.

**The structure and organisation of texts**

- Reader: The way this text is organised makes it easy to follow.
- Writer: I need to sequence my ideas to make the meaning clear.

## Co-construct an authentic purpose for writing

Establish an authentic purpose for writing that is related to the curriculum. Students can help to establish the purpose, and they will be more motivated and involved if they can see how the writing task is relevant to their cross-curricular learning.

Be alert to possibilities of writing for authentic purposes – in planned learning areas, about current events, and in students' responses to what they are learning.

### Example of reading and writing within a science context

> "Remember that text we read about the sea turtles yesterday? By reading about them, we were persuaded to consider the plight of the sea turtles as a conservation issue. We are going to have a go at writing a piece today that will give our readers an understanding of the dangers of the oil spill (which is currently in the news) both to the people and the environment. We will try to persuade the reader that oil is harmful to the planet."

| Talking about a text as a reader | Model of text<br>*"Plight of the Sea Turtle"* (School Journal, *Part 3 Number 2, 2008, pages 26–32.)* | Talking about texts as a writer |
| --- | --- | --- |
| • I draw on prior knowledge to understand the concept of time scale.<br>• I visualise the scene as the turtles are described.<br>• I infer that there is a problem, because I understand that the writer has used specific vocabulary to show that turtle numbers have declined.<br>• I predict what has caused the problem and what the solution might be. | *Sea turtles have swum in our oceans for millions of years, long outlasting even the dinosaurs. They were once a common sight in Pacific waters, their graceful bodies easy to spot just below the surface.*<br><br>*But over the last few decades, the number of sea turtles has plummeted. Today, each of the seven species of this reptile is either threatened or endangered. On some beaches, turtles have gone altogether.* | • I visualise the effect so that I can describe the scene:<br>*A fisherman stands ankle-deep in oil.*<br>• I give the reader clues that there is a problem:<br>*His toes feel the slickness of the oil that threatens his livelihood.* |

## Find connections across settings so that students can build on what they know

You can help your students to transfer their learning if they are aware of the purposes and features of relevant text types. For example, ask them:

- "What do we know about the structure of a text written to argue an opinion?"
- "How might a persuasive essay be structured?"
- "What do we know about structures for other kinds of essays and reports? Can we generalise from this?"

## Provide a time for your students to share their writing with one another

Students need to be able to respond to the writing of others and to express their response in writing. Provide opportunities for students to read and/or listen to and discuss their own and others' writing as members of an interactive learning community. Year 8 students are usually very interested in their peers.

## ❓ Questions for the teacher

- Am I building on my own knowledge of texts?
- Am I collecting models of specific text types that really engage me and will engage my students?

# *Instructional Strategies: Teaching Strategically*

It's essential that students in years 7 and 8 continue to have explicit instruction in writing. You can accelerate their progress across the curriculum with explicit teaching of the precise skills, knowledge, and strategies they need. As their expertise in creating effective texts continues to develop, they will become more confident about making choices in their writing and use writing more effectively to think about, record, and communicate ideas and information to meet specific learning purposes across the curriculum.

To find out more about deliberate acts of teaching, refer to *Effective Literacy Practice in Years 5 to 8*, chapter 4.

## *Use planned instructional approaches*

Decide which planned instructional approach (for example, shared writing, guided writing, or independent writing) is most appropriate for meeting your students' needs at a particular time. Identify your students' strengths and needs and group them for planned instruction.

*My students need to know that my job includes helping them to become independent writers. I'll be modelling, prompting, asking questions, giving feedback, and explaining things during lessons.*

Use your knowledge of your students to group them for planned instruction to suit their needs.

*I'll see this group today, just for ten minutes, to make sure they are on track with their personal narratives. They have been learning how to select significant events that they can elaborate on.*

*These students are writing quickly, but their spelling is inaccurate. I need to see them as a group to model strategies for approaching words they can't spell.*

For more on instructional approaches to writing, see *Effective Literacy Practice in Years 5 to 8*, pages111–118.

## *Design engaging, challenging tasks*

Design tasks that relate to relevant curriculum themes, topics, and contexts, for example:

- tasks based on what the students already know and what they need to learn:
  *These students are writing effective explanations for our science and social studies investigations. They understand how to use the features of explanations to convey what they have found out about volcanoes and the ash clouds that form, but they are not using paragraphs. I need to design a lesson that will show them how to decide where the paragraph break should be. I need to ensure that they see the value of this across a variety of text types and purposes. Learning about paragraphs will be useful for the persuasive essays that they are working on in social studies as well as for their character descriptions, which we have been working on in English.*

- tasks based on what the students will be interested in within this particular learning area:
  *What is relevant for these students? What do I need to do to get the students interested? (I could look for connections: a study of the art works of twentieth-century pop artists might become more relevant when comparisons are made between the messages and media of the pop artists and those of twenty-first-century street artists or between graphic novels and particular art works.)*

Make links with your students' prior knowledge about the world around them and about texts.

*Remember when we read that poem yesterday? Tell the person next to you three ways in which that writer appealed to our senses ... Today we're going to have a go at writing a sensory description in which we appeal to the reader's senses.*

*Today we'll be writing to describe – and we'll describe a place that you know really well.*

To find out more about planning and teaching writing in history and poetry contexts, go to writing teacher support materials for year 7 and 8 at http://literacyonline.tki.org.nz/Literacy-Online/Pedagogy/Writing-hub/Teacher-support-materials

# Enable students to set and meet goals

## Examples of teacher instruction

| Developing students' awareness by focusing their learning goals | Personalising instruction: Deliberate acts of teaching in shared and guided instruction |
|---|---|
| I am learning to:<br><br>• consider and discuss:<br>  – my purpose for writing<br>  – who I am writing for<br>  – what I want to write about<br>  – the best form to get my message across. | The teacher should be:<br><br>• modelling writing for particular purposes, making explicit and visible the thinking processes for:<br>  – setting a purpose<br>  – identifying an audience<br>  – considering appropriate content<br>  – selecting a text type and form;<br>• asking specific questions to clarify the students' thinking around purpose, audience, and content, for example, content may include main idea and supporting details. |
| I am learning to:<br><br>• consider each sentence as I write<br>• use dictionaries and a thesaurus to help me find words I need. | The teacher should be:<br><br>• modelling how to verbalise sentences before writing them down and providing opportunities for students to do this<br>• demonstrating a range of sentence forms and discussing word order and syntax with English language learners<br>• asking strategic questions to raise the students' awareness of the writing strategies they are using. |
| I am learning to:<br><br>• think about and identify the most effective words and phrases to use so that my writing has an impact on the audience<br>• select precise words to make my meaning clear<br>• check my work with a partner. | The teacher should be:<br><br>• sharing effective texts and directing and prompting the students to notice what effective writers do<br>• deconstructing texts<br>• directing attention to and explaining subject-specific vocabulary<br>• explicitly teaching new vocabulary and word forms that are not known by English language learners. (For an activity to help teach new vocabulary, see "concept circles" on the DVD *Making Language and Learning Work 3* or on ESOL Online at: http:esolonline.tki.org.nz) |

For more information on supporting your students with deliberate acts of teaching, see *Effective Literacy Practice in Years 5 to 8*, pages 155–160.

For information on how you can support your students to learn about phonological awareness and spelling, go to: http://soundsandwords.tki.org.nz

Support the students to meet their goals by planning deliberate acts of teaching for instructional writing, for example:

*I will be sharing effective texts in our reading sessions and directing and prompting the students to notice what effective writers do. I will prompt a personal response so that these students develop understanding about the impact of writing on the audience, and I will ensure that we discuss language and engage in regular tasks and activities to support vocabulary development. I will build on the students' prior knowledge and scaffold their transfer of new knowledge. I can prompt them to recall what we have discussed about the author's language choices in a text in reading and provide scaffolding for the students as they apply that learning to their own writing.*

## Respond to students' contributions with descriptive feedback

Tell the students exactly how their writing meets the purpose and the criteria, tell them how it affects you as a reader, and prompt them to make improvements that suit their writing purpose:

*You've used direct speech here, which provides me with a much clearer picture of the sort of character this is.*

*How could this scientific description be more precise? Yes, I agree that you need to choose the technical words carefully.*

## Develop students' metacognition

Students need to keep increasing their knowledge about texts and how language works and to keep building their repertoire of strategies for writing. In addition, they need to continually increase their metacognitive awareness. When students can articulate what they can do as writers, they are more able to set themselves new goals and meet new challenges.

Metacognition is thinking about learning. When students reflect on how they are going as learners, they become increasingly aware of where they are, where they are going, and how they can get there.

Students develop metacognition through participation in self-assessment and peer assessment. They develop a sense of what good writing looks like by asking questions such as "Is this piece long enough?" or "Does it meet its purpose?" Students' self-assessment and peer assessment also helps to make their thinking visible. It can be used as evidence of what they have learned and of their learning gaps. Support students developing metacognition by using: teaching strategies that clarify learning goals and criteria; dialogue and questioning about students' knowledge and reflection on learning; and feedback. In this way, students learn to monitor their own learning and develop insights into how they are progressing as learners.

## Monitor the impact of teaching

Take time to monitor the impact of your teaching, before, during, and after a lesson.

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**Before a lesson on describing an art work**
*I have considered the content planned for today's lesson by basing it around the needs of my students. Everyone in the class needs to select precise language to convey meaning and needs to paragraph correctly.*

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**During a lesson on reviewing a text model**
*They are all engaged in the task. I have checked that they all understand.*

*(After co-constructing criteria)*
*Are they using the criteria we developed? Are these criteria helping them?*

*(Independent writing – teacher roving)*
*They are all writing. They all know what they want to say. Some of that group are not being precise with their language choices – I need to provide more scaffolding for them.*

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**After a lesson on writing an opinion piece**
*From their writing, I can see that they are interested in the topic and have thought about their own opinions. Most of them have been precise in their descriptions. Choosing just the right words is something we need to talk about daily, across a range of different texts. I have written about paragraphing in quite a few of their writing books. I need to discuss paragraphs when we are reading, as well as in the context of other writing tasks, to make sure they have opportunities to practise what they are learning.*

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## Plan opportunities for students to practise

Your students need opportunities to practise what they have learned so that they become more independent and strategic writers. They also need opportunities to write independently for sustained periods. This may include crafting and recrafting a piece over time until it is complete. Encourage them to make decisions about:

- what to write about and what content to include

- the form the writing will take and the appropriate text features within that form (students should be able to identify text features and extract criteria from models of written text)

- how to plan for writing (and whether a plan is necessary)

- the strategies to use in their decisions about content, vocabulary, structure, and features
  *(What do I want to say? Which words will best say what I mean? What do I do when I'm not sure of the word I need? How should I sequence the ideas so that my meaning is clear? Would an analogy make this clearer?)*

- revising and editing the work for best effect in relation to their writing purpose. (This means students being self-regulatory as they review, reflect, and revise, for example, by asking themselves, *What will I change to make my meaning clear? Where can I check the spelling/meaning of that word?*) Your students should understand that monitoring their own spelling, punctuation, and grammar is part of the writing process, but you will need to support that process. Include some specific instruction around the conventions of text, but teach these in the context of a text purpose.

### ❓ Question for the teacher

- To supplement my own monitoring of my practice, could I arrange for a colleague to observe me and for them to then have a conversation with me about their observations?

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