

*'In order to write confidently, students need topic or field knowledge.'*

## Reading to write

### Key questions

- What is the relationship between reading and writing (and talking and listening)?
- What role does reading play in learning to write?
- How can teachers integrate reading into the teaching of writing?

Learning to write requires gaining control of language at the levels of text, paragraph, sentence and word. It involves knowledge about genre, text patterns, grammar and vocabulary, spelling & punctuation, and being able to choose language for a particular purpose, and to communicate with a particular audience. Most primary teachers attend to these aspects of language as part of the regular literacy block. This paper argues the importance of the reading and writing connection, of 'reading to write' as part of literacy instruction.

Students become literate as they develop the knowledge, skills and dispositions to interpret and use language in different curriculum areas across the years of schooling.

- Students enter school with much exposure to spoken language which becomes the basis for early literate experiences.
- While talking and listening remain important, learning to write (or create) and read (or view) become increasingly important as curriculum areas become more specialised in the later years of primary school and into secondary school.
- Writing (or creating) in particular provides teachers and others with tangible evidence of students' learning as they construct texts using spoken, written and visual modes in a range of mediums.
- This emphasis on students' texts often threatens to overshadow and pre-empt the importance of reading to students' success in writing.
- According to research<sup>1</sup>, good readers make good writers. Sometimes good readers are poor writers, but poor readers are seldom good writers.

Reading and viewing builds students' topic or field knowledge. In order to write confidently, students need to have something to 'say'. In other words, they need knowledge of their topic, built up in a variety of ways through collaborative and independent reading and viewing activities. For example,

- For informative texts, students must know how to locate useful information in text through evaluating sources, using headings and subheadings or 'breadcrumbs', and key words, skimming and scanning
- When students and teachers sharing topic or field-related information through class discussions, wall charts and displayed notes, the collective information is available to all students to draw on when creating texts
- Strategies such as storyboarding, and notetaking with graphic organisers shaped to the text that students must produce, provide a strong bridge into writing.

In order to structure texts according to their purpose for writing, students must organise their ideas according to the genre as well as select the appropriate language features and images that will connect with their target audience.

- Teachers should provide a range of model texts and deconstruct these with students, pointing out how these are organised to achieve their purpose (i.e. to argue, persuade, to discuss, to entertain), the particular language and other meaning making resources evident, and how we can infer the intended audience from these choices.
- When students encounter a variety of texts representing a particular genre, they can identify similarities and differences among them in order to determine which features are obligatory and which are optional

<sup>1</sup> Miller, B. McCardle, P. & Long, R. (2012) The Reading-Writing Connection. Newark, USA: International Reading Association & Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) (NIH)

<https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/b309/79b43434af1d01105189adf9886ed10fc312.pdf>

- Reading and deconstructing texts are rich activities for classroom discussions and offer opportunities for the development of students' oral language skills as well as their understandings about how language and other meaning-making resources work.
- Through deconstructing and analysing texts, teachers point out to students the literate resources the author has used (to persuade, inform, entertain etc) so that students can appropriate those resources for their own writing.

## Key points

- Writing and reading (and talking and listening) are interdependent in the process of becoming literate.
- Students need to read in order to write confidently.
- Reading provides students access to models of the texts that they must write.
- Students must read in order to reflect, edit and refine their ideas

## Further information

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