

Abstract

Children in the classroom are required to write for many reasons. This may be in the form of a response or explanation of literature, mathematics and integrated areas as well as for enjoyment. The student who does little writing is detached from the learning in the education system and their potential for growth is limited. An examination of a student's writing is a powerful assessment tool and indicates the next growth point for him/her. The educational ramifications for these students in the classroom is that without appropriate scaffolding of high support and high expectations by the teacher their learning will not progress and they will rarely experience the satisfaction of producing a piece of work.

The aim of this research was to expose the children to the SAID framework (Raban) using the strategies of shared, language experience and interactive writing. There was a strong emphasis on the oral conversation between teacher and child to elicit the message the student wanted to convey to the audience before scribing it onto paper. The students were given a stimulus picture or story to base the conversation around and so there was a common focus. The students were given question prompts of how, when, where and what to consider when forming their response.

This research project enabled the group to have an experience of success with writing and collaboratively producing a published piece of work. Each member of the group grew in their depth of writing material and had a better understanding of what they know how to do well, especially in the area of writing high frequency words.

The implications of this project is that each student requires a chance to talk about what they want to write and the teacher is to be an active listener and at this point scaffold the child prior to performing the writing task.

Introduction

There are children in the grade two level that view writing as "a mysterious and often frustrating activity" They have difficulty with writing a piece of work. Their writing has a minimal amount of detail in it. This may be due to difficulties in performing both the authorial and secretarial components of writing with any level of confidence and/or enthusiasm. They spend the writing time detached from the task. They show signs of confusion as to how to begin any form of writing genre.

There are many reasons for concern with children who do not participate in writing activities. The children have no way of indicating to concerned educationalists the strengths and challenges they have in regards to both the authorial and secretarial aspects of the writing component of literacy.

"Children learn to write and write to learn. In the school environment the focus of teaching should be to provide a variety of real situations that require the use of written language so that children can develop a range of strategies and skills that will enable them to function in society as literate adults." (First Steps)

It is an expectation of all learning areas that students will be able to write about the learning they have been involved in. Bobbi Fisher (1995) states that writing is essential to literacy development and so must become a part of the daily curriculum. "*Writing should be connected to reading, talking, listening and the curriculum.*" (First steps)

It is also a necessary task in our everyday life and it is through writing that we maintain messages over a period of time and distance. Writing is a way of sharing our thoughts, beliefs, feelings and understandings with others.

Marie Clay states "*if we plan instruction that links oral language with literacy learning (Writing and reading) from the start- so that writing and reading and oral language move forward together, linked and patterned from the start- instruction will be more powerful (Clay,2001).*

Hill and Langford (1984) noted that “*They saw reading and writing as mutually reinforcing.*”

“*Writing is a complex activity. It involves simultaneously thinking about what to write, coherence and cohesion of the text, formation and legibility of individual letters, spelling, grammar including punctuation, layout, tone and register, organisation and selection of appropriate content for an intended audience.*” (First Steps, pg.)

It is with the understanding of this complexity that it is recommended by First Steps to focus on one or two aspects at one time so that they can practice new skills until they become automatic. The self-efficacy of students that they can write will evolve into students who will want to write and gain a love and appreciation of its power in our literate world. McCabe and Howard, 2001) self-efficacy is the personal belief that students have about their ability to succeed at a particular task.

Curriculum and Standards Framework11-English rational is “*effective and active participation in Australian society depends on the ability to speak, listen, read, view and write with confidence, purpose and enjoyment in a wide range of contexts*”.

Munro’s reading model of MLOTP can be transferred to the writing component of Literacy. It illustrates the link between reading and writing and oral language.

Word level- spelling of individual words using prior knowledge of onset and rime, letter clusters and high frequency words. The use of more complex vocabulary to elicit a stronger image to the writer’s audience

Sentence Level- composing sentences that follow the conventions of written language.

Conceptual and Topic Level- understanding the audience it is being written for and being aware that others will need to understand the purpose of their writing. This requires the author to understand the type of genre they will need to utilize to convey their message.

Oral language knowledge- to be able to verbalize one’s knowledge and/or experience of the subject so that the audience understands and can visualize it. To be able to clarify one’s thoughts so that it is understood by others and to apply this to the piece of writing.

Clay hopes that with this positive and explicit teaching that those that have had 3 years of confusions will break the cycle of ‘learning to be learning disabled.

McCarrier, & Pinnell & Fountas (1999) described the characteristics of students at stages of their writing development. They divided the stages into 8 levels: Emergent 1, 2 & 3; Early 1, 2 & 3; Transitional and Self-extending. The authors also identified the focus of the interactive writing lesson for each child or children in order to support their growing awareness of the various aspects of composing a text type.

Dr. Pauline Gibbons believes that children need the opportunity of speaking aloud to an audience. It is this active listening by the teacher and constructive feedback which scaffolds the child to clarify his/her thoughts before applying themselves to the writing process. In her on-going research with Year 3/4 students the impact of this scaffolding of the oral conversation impacts positively on the standard of writing.

Prediction: The explicit teaching of grade two children who have difficulty with the writing process using SAID framework using the questions of who, where, when, what and why together with stimulus pictures will increase the quantity and quality and their writing output. The teacher will scaffold their learning by offering high support in the oral discussion but will gradually decrease the level of teacher scribing by using the strategies of shared, language experience and interactive writing.

Method

Participants: The experimental group comprises of 4 grade two children, three boys and one girl. Two children had reading recovery in 2004. One child is new to the school and the other child was involved in a support group last year.

Relevant characteristics: The children are passive in the writing component in the Literacy block. They tend to never complete tasks and can often be found off-task by sharpening pencils, daydreaming or/and chatting to the classmates.

Student One: This male student experiences difficulty with expressive language, which was the finding of a Speech Pathologies assessment. His mother was involved in the Speech Pathology programs and works with this child in the area of scene starters at home. He received Reading Recovery in Year One. He was discontinued successfully due to his ability to read Level 22 texts at an Instructional level. There were concerns, however, about his writing in regards to both the secretarial issues of spelling and legibility and authorial in the composition of a structured sentence using the conventions of English. He struggled to begin a piece of writing and often required support to shape his thoughts into a sentence.

Student Two: This male student is new to the school. He is a child who can confidently read at an independent level. He is able to articulate his thoughts and has a good range of vocabulary. It is at the writing session that he is reluctant to produce a single piece of work.

Student Three: This male student is often detached from any task when not supported by an adult. He tends to be a daydreamer. He often requires reminders to listen to other's contributions to discussions. He was on the tentative list for Reading Recovery but did not receive coverage. He has difficulty transferring his idea into a conventional sentence.

Student Four: This female student received Reading Recovery last year. She experienced difficulties with reading. Her sentences are simple but generally follow the conventions of a written piece of text. She does have difficulty with certain speech sound and her demeanour is young. Her spelling errors are indicative of her speech difficulties.

Materials: Selection process The selection process was determined by Writing Vocabulary component of the Observation survey. The children who only wrote between 20-30 words were selected.

The Spelling Analysis, which examined:

- the number of words written
- the total vocabulary
- errors under two headings of essential words and experimental words
- safe words that he/she know how to write
- the words that are repeatedly incorrectly spelt

First Steps Profiles of Writing Development was used to analysis each child's piece of writing. Each student was operating within the experimental writing continuum as determined by the indicators.

Procedure

Raban (2000) has devised the **SAID** framework to support students in writing. Bobbie Fischer (1995) divides the writing process into five stages. The two researchers can be linked together to create a strong framework for teachers to follow.

The teacher will **stimulate** the thoughts of the child on a chosen topic. This will require oral communication of thoughts to all those in the group.

1. **Rehearsal** is often preliminary to the writing and it involves thinking, talking and reading as a way of planning what will be written.

Hutton states that “If children are allowed to talk about their ideas and experiences and helped to write well structured meaningful sentences they will learn to communicate and organize their thoughts.”

Clay encourages teachers to invite children to be a part of the conversations by personalizing it into shared experiences.

The teacher will **articulate** the particular aspects of the writing process.

2. **Drafting** is the writing of the piece and is still interspersed with thinking and talking Clay (1983) p29 the most effective way of raising the level of a child’s control over the structures of English is to provide him/her with many opportunities to speak with competent and flexible adult speakers of English.

Marie Clay encourages all teachers to increase language opportunities with rich conversations that allow children with the opportunity to compose and construct language.

The child and teacher will **integrate** what is known in reading and transfer it to the writing task. Integration is also for the student to know that we write for an audience to read.

3. **Editing** helps the student finalize the piece of the writing with the support of the teacher

The children will **demonstrate** their understanding of the links between the spoken and written language by rereading what they have written in collaboration with the teacher and peers.

4. **Publishing** fine tunes the secretarial issues of spelling and grammar

5. **Sharing** with a friend or a larger group.

“Opportunity to interact with the teacher and peers is an essential part of learning to write.” (First Steps)

The sessions will take place within the Writing component of the Literacy block and will be scheduled for three times a week of thirty minutes duration.

Session one, two and three- Shared Writing.

This is a shared construction of text with a stimulus picture. The teacher and the students compose the text together using planning, composing, recording and revising sections of the writing process. The teacher holds the pen.

Session four, five and six- Language experience

The teacher and students discuss an event, experience or engage in a picture chat. The emphasis is to put ‘a press’ on the student’s language and they are encouraged to be creative and to freely express their thoughts. Students are to write the easy parts and the teacher records the harder parts.

Session seven, eight - Interactive Writing

This strategy provides the bridge between *language experience and guided writing*. The teacher facilitates, guides, responds and extends the student’s thinking in the process of composing texts. The teacher writes the easy words and the student’s work on harder words that will include high frequency words. The teacher will support their attempts by demonstrating the use of sound boxes or analogy. (Munroe)

Assessment task of having a stimulus picture that deals with a subject that appeals to all children. Each student will orally relay a personal experience, incorporating the stimulus words of where, when, who and what. It is during this discussion that the teacher will ask students to clarify their thoughts so that the group will understand his/her message. Each will be expected to write without the support of the teacher.

Results

The results indicate that all students will increase the quality and quantity of writing output when they have high support and high expectations within the SAID framework. The strategies of shared; language experience and interactive writing provided the scaffolding to increase students control over the scribing aspect of the writing component. The movement from interactive writing in the last session to independent writing as was asked in the post test was a natural progression. The students were more able and willing to do the post test due to the confidence gained at each stage. The trends for the group indicated that all students benefited in various degrees to the format of the sessions. They became comfortable with the expectations and structure of the lessons and this supported their contributions.

Each student had a different aspect of the framework they needed to concentrate on so that the overall prediction of an increase in the quality and quantity of writing could be achieved.

The visual stimulus enabled the group to focus in on a single topic and encouraged them to listen to each other's ideas and contribute to the group story. The question prompts also assisted children to formulate a sentence for the group story.

There were anecdotal notes taken by the teacher on each child's contribution and on the group's ability to listen to their peers and elaborate on their ideas so that it was understandable to the group and the bigger audience.

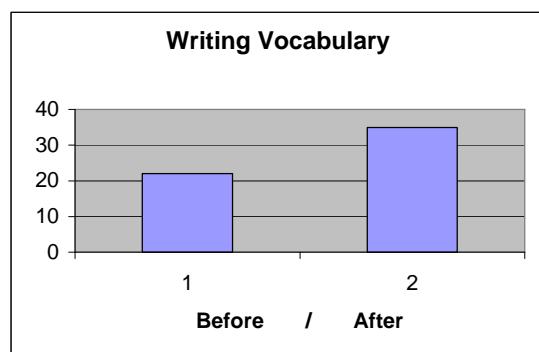
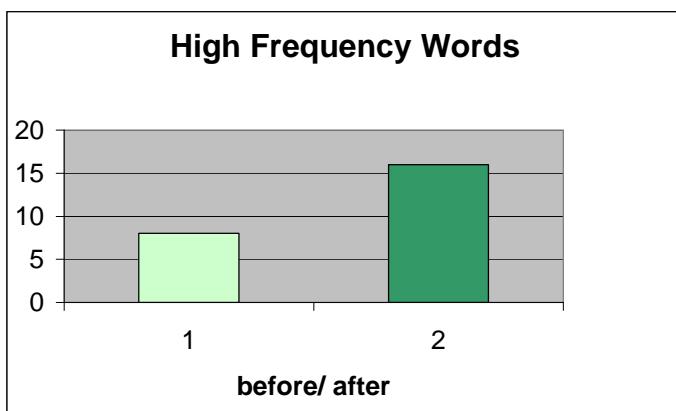
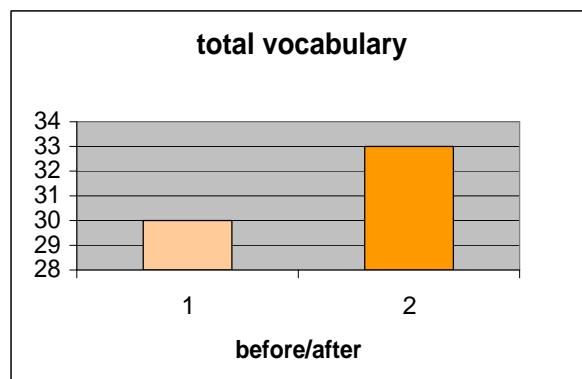
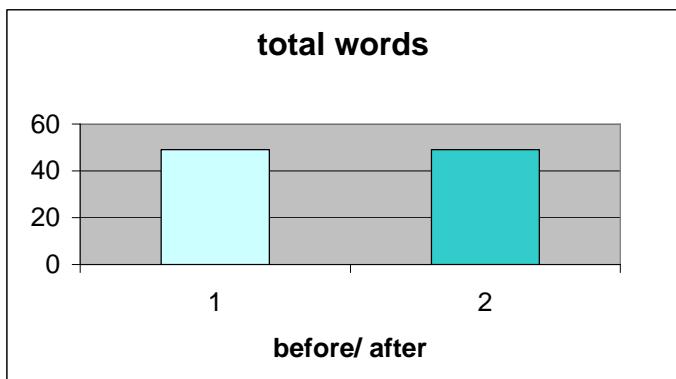
Student One

This student was comfortable with contributing a thought in the planning stage of the session but generally had difficulty with incorporating this word into a sentence. He enjoyed the *shared writing* strategy with the emphasis on the teacher doing the writing. He became anxious when we moved to the *language experience strategy*. He was reluctant to pick up a texta but once he experienced success of writing words he knew he became keen to contribute more often and expressed pleasure with his penmanship since legibility is an issue for this student. The student was positive about participating in the *Interactive Writing Strategy* and with the support of the teacher he attempted the harder words with a pleasing level of success.

The results do not indicate a marked change in the amount of words written between the two tests but there was an improvement in the quality of the writing. In the Pre-test the piece of writing was a list of games he liked to play. The post test contained events but not necessarily in sequence.

He increased the number of words written independently. There was an increase in the number of high frequency words correctly written in his piece of writing. This reflects the confidence he experienced in each of the strategies especially in *Interactive Writing*.

The focus for this student was to formulate sentences orally using the conventions of the English language so that listeners and eventually readers would understand his message.

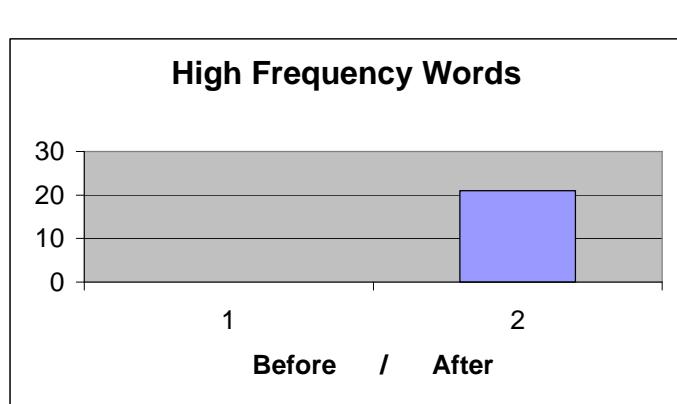
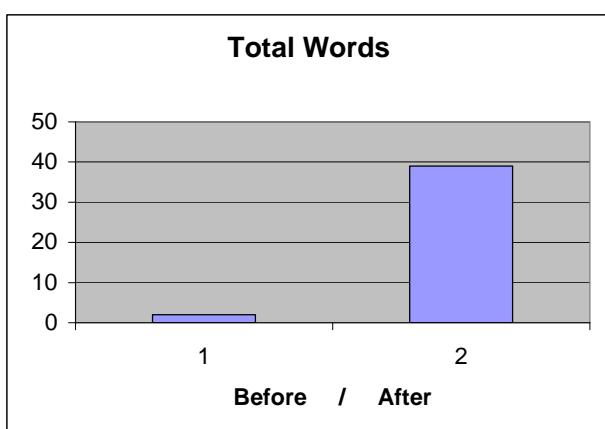


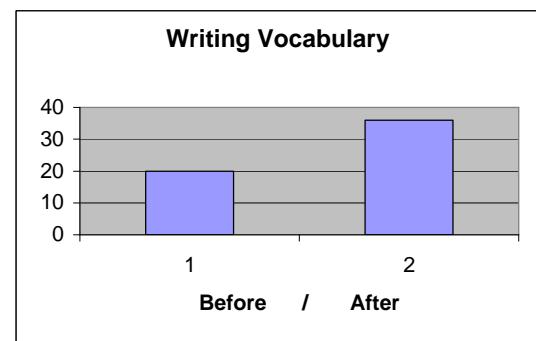
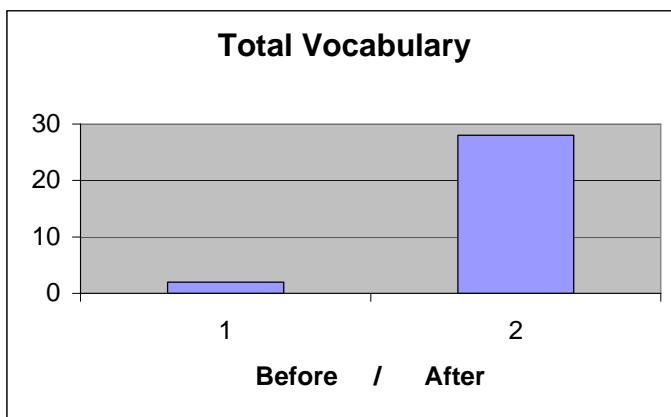
Student Two

This student demonstrated an enthusiasm for sharing his ideas with the group. He was able to edit his own contribution by offering alternative vocabulary that would paint a better picture for the audience. He was absent for three sessions and this impacted on the group by not having a more able oral speaker to contribute and support their attempts.

This student made a marked improvement in all areas of his writing because in the post test he actually wrote. He was a confident contributor to the oral discussions in the sessions from the beginning. The scaffolding of the sessions impacted on his self-efficacy as an able writer. He even used some of the topics we were talking about to produce pieces of writing in the classroom. It was a turning point in his writing, when he approached me after the third session and said that he was using one of our stimulus pictures to create his own story at school.

The focus of this project for this student was to bring his understandings of how we speak and how texts work to the writing task.

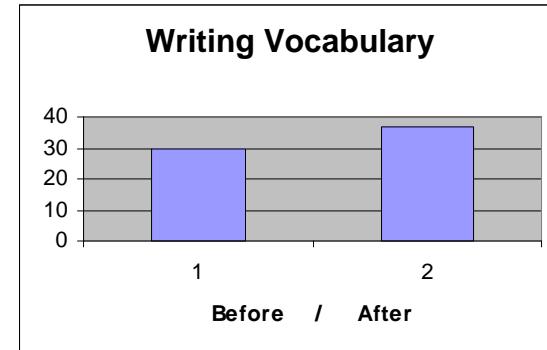
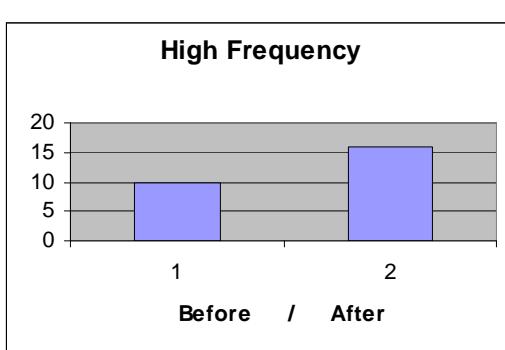
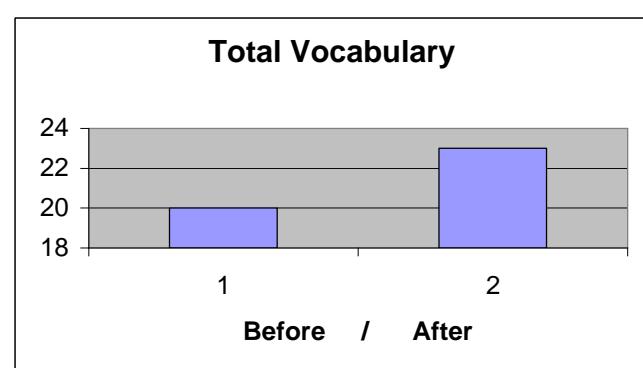
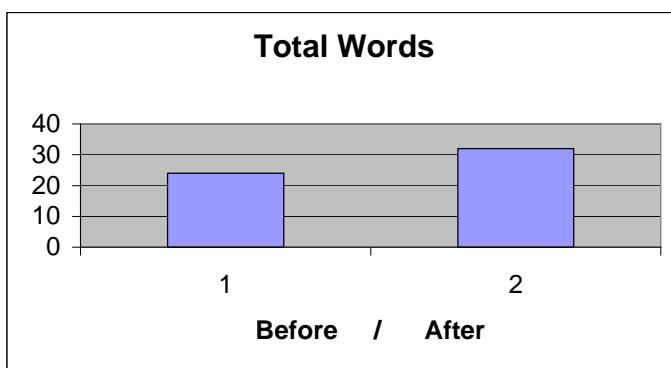




Student Three

This student did improve on his initial test but the gains were minimal. He struggled with clearly stating his ideas and then listening to the ideas of others. He tended to be less involved in the discussions with his peers. He tended to be on the outskirts of the group both physically and emotionally. He preferred to be the last in contributing his ideas and required prompting and encouragement and an expectation that there would be a time for him to speak. This student required thinking time and this impacted on his engagement with the group. I began to expect each child to react to other's ideas and this encouraged this child to listen to the other members of the group.

The focus for this student was to be an active and enthused member of the group and to engage in the speaking and listening aspect of the project.

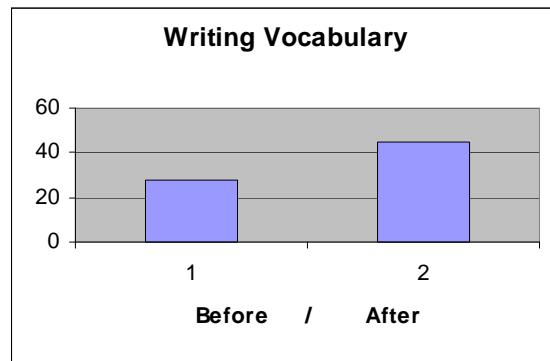
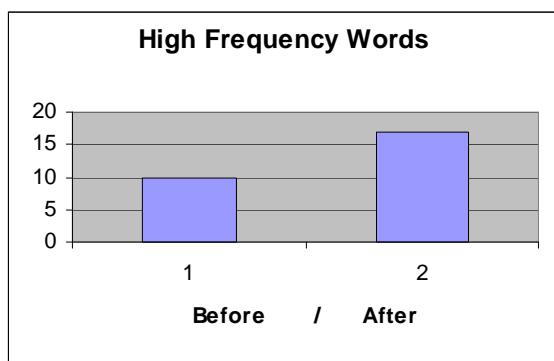
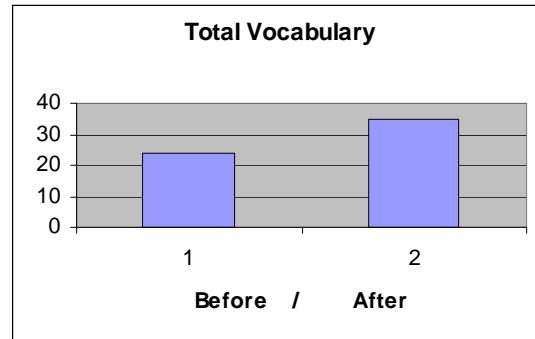
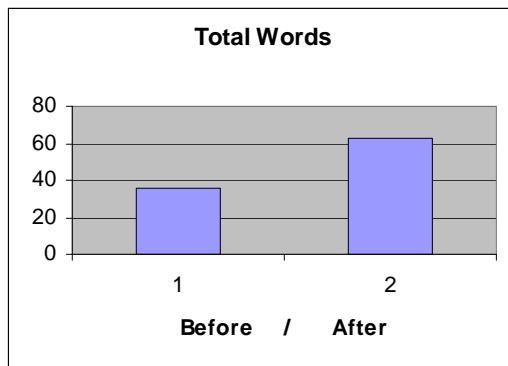


Student Four

This student was an active member of the group. She enjoyed the creation of stories with her peers. She developed her ideas from simple stories at the start of the programme to ones that contained more information with more complex language by the end. The scaffolding of the sessions increased her confidence as a writer. She showed greater control with high frequency words. It was important for her to practice some high frequency words so that she would be able to use them in

another time and place. Her attempts at experimental words indicated developing skills of hearing and recording all sounds heard in words.

The emphasis for this child was in the secretarial issues of writing high frequency words and attempting experimental words with a greater degree of accuracy.



Discussion

Classrooms are full of talk, especially teacher talk. Often children are placed in the position of endeavouring to unlock the thoughts of the teacher to attain praise. It is often an issue of management and time and an expectation of the curriculum to complete all tasks that teachers often dominate the talking for learning. It is in the writing element of literacy that provides a strong opportunity for children to gain ownership and direction in their learning. It is a time for teachers to ask open-ended questions so that children can reflect on each stage of their writing. Carl Anderson uses the open-ended question of “How’s it going?” in his conferencing to invite students to speak about their story and the learning they are involved in at the moment.

The results strongly support all the literature, which articulates the linkage between oral language and writing outcomes. Dr. Pauline Gibbons stated that if we scaffold the oral language with high support by the teacher it would make a difference to the writing quality and quantity of each student. This was profoundly illustrated in three students’ last piece of work. She refers to the work of Vygotskian theorists that we must discover the ‘Zone of Proximal Development’ in order to take the child to the next level of understanding.

The results of three students confirmed my hypothesis that with high support and high expectations from the teacher students are able to increase the quantity and quality of their writing piece. These students were more involved in the group discussions and were active listeners as well as speakers. They were stimulated by the activities. They were willing to share ideas with the group and modify them when necessary. The student who made minimal progress was more introverted in discussions. He required more think time and due to this was less attentive to the others.

This student's results were unexpected because generally his starting point in the pre test was stronger than the other students.

The scaffolding of high support and high expectations is a feature of the SAID framework and the strategies of shared, language experience and interactive writing. In the first three sessions the students became comfortable and confident in the expectations of the shared writing strategy of producing a sentence or idea that the teacher would write so that the audience would understand the message. Once they were comfortable with this strategy they were moved into the next stage of writing the easy words while still orally composing a story. Initially they were hesitant to take up a pen but once they knew that it entailed writing words that they already knew it was exciting for them to see their coloured pen on the text. The transition into the next strategy was easier for the students because they had experienced success in the previous strategies. They were supported to attempt the more difficult words when given a spelling strategy suggested by Clay of either analogy or sound boxes and that their first attempt was on their own sheet and not in front of their peers. This research endeavoured to concentrate on one or two skills at a time as recommended in First Steps. Raban's format of SAID also incorporates the integration of prior knowledge and to transfer this to the new task.

The implications for teaching practice is that if classrooms are to contain active involved students then it is necessary to:

- Scaffold their learning;
- Provide opportunities for success in writing;
- Have writing as a daily task in classrooms;
- Value each student's contribution to discussions
- Develop a love of writing by writing;

The teacher needs to be an active listener to the child's talk so that the teacher can scaffold the student's thoughts with questioning that leads the student to clarify his/her message. This is particularly important in the planning stage of writing, especially for students who are experiencing difficulties. This allows the student to do the authorial thinking before he/she has to be involved in the more complex aspects of writing. Dr. Pauline Gibbons cited evidence in her ongoing research that expenditure of time and effort by the teacher in these purposeful conversations has a positive outcome on student's writing.

Implications for future work with children who struggle with both oral and written language is that they require the modelling of a more able speaker, be it an adult or another child. This was the premise of Marie Clay in her research on how important it is for children to be surrounded with rich language. It is important that students with language difficulties be paired with more able students in group activities that require conversation. It should be as important as a guided reading or writing group and so included in the work program as a group activity with a focus and an outcome.

Oral language is the most complex of all the literacy areas and the most important because it underpins all areas of learning.

It is at the conclusion of this project that questions are raised as to how we teachers can better develop the oral language of children in the classroom. The literature reiterates the importance of oral language to student's learning and teachers recognise its importance but it is harder to control and organise in their overcrowded curriculum. I believe that many practitioners can place it in the too hard basket.

It is important to increase the questioning techniques of teachers so that they move away from literal to the higher order thinking questions. There is a need to research the type of questions that predominate the classroom conversation for learning.

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Appendix

Shared Writing

<u>Format</u>	<u>Lesson One</u>	<u>Lesson Two</u>	<u>Lesson Three</u>
Stimulate: Invite students to be involved in the construction of the piece of writing.	Students make thumb prints on the page These thumbprints become characters in the Thumb family	Present to the children the setting of a beach. The children select a picture from a magazine of a person. They will place in the picture.	Read to the students the story of "Dear Zoo". Discuss the adjectives used to describe the animals. Where are there natural surroundings? Identify their home is the jungle and what we would see there.
Articulate: Invite students to decide what they want written about each of the characters personality or physical appearance. They can also express their ideas of each character's thoughts.	Teacher tells the time this takes place. Write in each speech balloon what each character is thinking about. Under each character write words to describe him/her.	The teacher will scribe words that describe each character. The teacher will scribe words that describe the setting.	The teacher will scribe words that describe each character and where they are and what they are doing. The teacher will scribe words that describe the setting.
Integrate: Engage students in formulating the language to be written by the teacher. The children to discuss with each other an appropriate sentence for each character.	The children discuss with each other a sentence that will be applicable for each character in the story. Each student will have an opportunity to contribute to the written text.	The teacher and students will use the vocabulary to write about the place and people in the picture	The teacher and students will use the vocabulary to write about their chosen animal in the jungle.
Demonstrate:	Each child reads	The group will read	The group will read

Each student has the opportunity to re-read the sentence they created and the teacher wrote to indicate the links between the spoken and written language.	their sentence The group will read the whole text together. The children may suggest modifications to the text for better clarity of the ideas for the audience.	back the prose and discuss if the message makes sense and is written with the purpose of conveying an interesting message to the reader. To note if any changes are necessary to improve the piece. To use poster notes to change any words in the story.	back the prose and discuss if the message makes sense and is written with the purpose of conveying an interesting message to the reader. To note if any changes are necessary to improve the piece. To use poster notes to change any words in the story.
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Language Experience Writing

<u>Format</u>	<u>Lesson four</u>	<u>Lesson five</u>	<u>Lesson six</u>
Stimulate Engage the students in thinking about an experience or activity they have all been engaged in recently. It is to be an enjoyable to all the students.	The conversation was centred around the Twilight Sports that they all attended on the weekend. They gave vocabulary that described the events.	The stimulus will be an Easter egg wrapping. They each will describe the Easter egg they will receive on Easter Sunday	The stimulus will be a picture of a playground at the local park. The students will discuss what they like to do on each piece of equipment.
Articulate Tell and show the student how the speech and writing come together in this text.	Each student rehearsed the sentence so that there was a feeling of co-construction.	Each student rehearses the sentence so that there was a feeling of co-construction.	Each student formulates a sentence and then rehearses the sentence so that there was a feeling of co-construction.

			Each student will listen to the suggestions made by their peers.
Identify The students are involved in writing the easy words and the teacher writes the hard ones. It is important to continue to re-read what has already been written so as to monitor the writing.	Each student re-reads the sentence thus far so that each would know what word was required next.	Each student re-reads the sentence thus far so that each will know what word is required next.	Each student re-reads the sentence thus far so that each will know what word or phrase is required next.
Demonstrate Provide opportunities for the student to demonstrate their understanding of the links between spoken and written language by rereading the completed piece of writing.	The group read the text written and confer that this message is what they wanted to convey to others.	The group will read the text written and confer that this message is what they will want to convey to others.	The group will read the text written and confer that this message is what they will want to convey to readers.

Interactive Writing

<u>Format</u>	<u>Lesson Seven / Eight</u>
<p>Stimulate Invite students to compose and help record a brief message.</p>	<p>Picture chat of boys jumping in a pile of autumn leaves. The discussion concentrated on activities we do outside in the backyard. The questions asked to clarify our meaning to the reader were; When? Where? Who? What? Why?</p>
<p>Articulate Demonstrate to students the various aspects of the recording process. Support them in making appropriate choices when recording new or unfamiliar words. Negotiate spelling strategies</p>	<p>The students initially composed a sentence orally including answers to all the above questions. Each student had their own 'Have-a-go' sheets where they initially attempted a difficult word. The strategies shown to the children were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Boxes for each letter heard in the word • Analogy of a known word to an unknown word. • Write a high frequency word several times on different surfaces so that it may imprint on the child's brain
<p>Integrate Demonstrate that the recording aspect is part of the writing process. Show that people convey meaning to others by the use of written language.</p>	<p>Re-read while constructing the sentence to ensure that the message will be clear to the reader. To be aware that there needs to be clear formation of letters and that there are spaces between words.</p>
<p>Demonstrate Provide students with the opportunity to demonstrate their emerging awareness of how to use conventional written language so that others can readily interpret writing. To understand the links between</p>	<p>The text was re-read by the students to ensure that the message was clear. This gave the student an opportunity to edit any language that was unclear to the reader. The students decided to change 'One sunny, aut umn af ter noon' to "On a</p>

the various aspects of the writing process.	sunny autumn afternoon". This indicated that they do the activity more than once.
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Due to the extra expectations of Interactive writing in regards to the students writing the hard words the time taken to complete the task was two sessions.

Assessment task:

Format	Procedure
Stimulus	<p>There is a picture chat that incorporates a group of children enjoying a birthday party. Each student is encouraged to relate this picture to a personal experience.</p> <p>Who? When? Why? Where? What?</p>
Articulate	<p>Each child will speak about their own experience of having a birthday party. The teacher and peer may offer support, especially to clarify the ideas of the speaker.</p>
Identify	<p>There will be a quick discussion of the aspects of the writing that each will need to include in his/her piece of writing.</p>
Demonstrate	<p>At the conclusion of the writing time each student will share their story with the group.</p>

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