The Write Stuff

Overview

1. Producing written text
2. Common difficulties with written text production for students with LLD
3. Evidence-based instructional practices that improve text level written language

Producing Text

WRITING

- Requires coordination of highly complex mental processes to produce
- Makes simultaneous statements about linguistic knowledge, world knowledge and social cognition/awareness
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WRITING
- Not automatic and natural
- Does not become effortless with practice
  However;
  - Its complexity is one of its virtues; encourages/requires higher order thinking skills
    - Interpreting, evaluating, synthesising, analysing

Main issues with producing text
- What shall I write?
  Content generation
- How do I write it?
  Transcription and organization

Content Generation
1. Accessing what you know
2. Selecting what is relevant
3. Organising what you have selected

Producing Text
- The ability to use text structure to access, organise and revise content is an important strategy for effective production and understanding of written communication
The knowledge of the writing process is strongly correlated with text production.

The more students know about the different stages of the writing process and the more proficient they are in executing these stages, the better the quality of their text tends to be.

**Writing and students with LLD**
1. Knowledge of text (genre) structure

- judge texts by
  - length
  - mechanical issues
  - accuracy of information
- affects content generation because retrieval of topic information is not goal directed
- affects comprehension and production

2. Knowledge of the writing process

- one shot process
- knowledge telling
- believe good writing is related to form and mechanics. Rarely make substantive changes
  
  *Resemble younger ‘novice’ writers*

2. Knowledge of the writing process

- fewer strategies for working through process
- poor at using taught strategies

3. Written product

- poorly organised
- less cohesive (list-like)
- irrelevant, inappropriate material for genre, topic
- use simpler syntactic constructions
- don’t expand on ideas
- tend to write less
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Instructional Practices that Improve Text Level Written Language Skills

What to teach

1. The purpose, structure and language features of texts

Genre

= typical ways people have come to organise or structure discourse to achieve particular purposes

= ways that people make meaning with one another in stages to achieve their goals
Genre

*Systemic functional linguistic approach*

**PURPOSE**
- structure
- language features

(= organisational framework /schema)

1. The purpose, structure and language features of texts

**Activities**
- Looking for patterns;
  - Same genre, different topics (how and why are the texts similar)
  - Same topic, different genres (how and why are the texts different)
  - Identifying text types

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1. Purpose, structure and language features

- Identifying language features
- Analysing good and flawed texts

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1. Purpose, structure and language features

- Provide ‘Plans of Action’ for working through stages of the text;
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2. Explicitly teach stages of writing process

- Provide ‘Plans of Actions’ for working through the whole writing process
  
  e.g. POWER

- Provide ‘Plans of Action’ for working through each stage
  
  e.g. PLANS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TREE</th>
<th>DARE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Topic Sentence</td>
<td>Develop topic sent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reasons (&gt;3)</td>
<td>Add supporting ideas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explain reasons</td>
<td>Eject arguments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ending</td>
<td>End with a conclusion</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### POWER

- P lan
- O rganise
- W rite draft
- E dit
- R ewrite

### Plan & Organise

1. PLANS

   - Pick goals (purpose of paper)
   - List ways to meet goals
   - And
   - Make N otes
   - S equence notes
Plan & Organise

2. POW
   P ick my ideas
   O rganise my notes
   W rite and say more

Write Draft

WRITE
   W ork from your plan to develop a thesis statement
   R emember your goals
   I nclude transition words for each paragraph
   T ry to use different kinds of sentences
   E xciting, interesting million-dollar words.

Edit

1. COPS
   C ontent
   O rganisation
   P unctuation & spelling
   S entences

Edit

2. CDO
   C ompare
   D iagnose
   O perate

3. SCAN
   S does it make Sense?
   C is it Connected to goal?
   A can I Add more?
   N ote errors (use COPS)
How to teach ‘Plans of Action’ (strategies)

1. Develop background knowledge (vocab and concepts for strategy)
2. Discuss it
3. Model it
4. Memorise it
5. Support it
6. Use it (independent performance)

* Self-Regulated Strategy Development, Harris et al., 2009

Teaching ‘Plans of Action’ (strategies)

- Adapt to individual needs and task demands
- Need to teach methodically
- Need to help transfer to new situations
- Metalinguistic and metacognitive skills involved
- Aim is for internalisation

Pros
- A tool for all writing situations
- Students think about the process, become self-directed learners

Cons
- Takes a long time for students with LLD to learn and use independently

3. Teach reading and writing together

- Mechanics
- Higher level skills
e.g. teaching around text structure and language features can be used to assist reading comprehension as well as text production (e.g. text identification activities)
3. Teach reading and writing together

- Vocabulary
  - use of descriptive words, (descriptions, narratives, recounts)
  - adverbs (procedures)
  - specific, technical vocabulary (information reports)

- Grammar
  - post modifying clauses (e.g. wombats are mammals that ... (information reports, persuasive texts))

4. Explicitly teach self-monitoring skills

- Set clear and specific goals for what students are to achieve in their writing
  - e.g.
    - when editing (add three things)
    - write more words (graph results)
    - include more text elements
    - monitoring time management by graphing progress through stages of POWER

- Discuss achievements and set new goals

1. Teach writing often

- How much time/week spent teaching text level writing vs basic writing skills?

Students’ writing gains are associated with how frequently evidence-based practices are applied (and how faithfully they are implemented)

(Kiuhara, Graham & Hawken, 2009)
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2. Be explicit (provide supportive practice)
   - Think aloud (externalise the internal)
   - Model
   - Joint construction
   - Independent construction
   - Strategy instruction

3. Be specific
   - Feedback
   - Goal setting
   - Common vocabulary

4. Emphasize whole text production
   - Develop an integrated series of lessons that traverse the entire writing process
   - Writing is experienced as a whole cognitive exercise in all its complexity
     - Write in meaningful contexts but also need to learn to write to show knowledge but also ……

5. Provide specific skills practice
   - E.g.
     - Vocabulary
     - Grammar
     - Mechanics
E.g. Writing Lessons

1. Reviewing (Quick Quiz)
   - Purpose
   - Structure
   - Language features
   - POWER

2. Teaching (subskill practice)
   e.g.
   - Editing
   - Peer collaboration
   - Language features (grammar, vocabulary for the topic and genre)

3. Applying (whole text practice)
   - Working through whichever stage of the process student or class is up to in POWER

6. Manipulate demands
   - Manipulate the demands on some skill areas to allow students to concentrate on one particular skill at a time

a. Mechanical demands
   - Scribing, drawing
   - Joint constructions
   - Cloze sheets
   - Sequencing cut up texts
b. Topic knowledge demands

- Familiar topic, own choice
- Provide information

c. Reading demands

- Reading level demands
  - Fact sheets (easier >>>> harder)
  - Documentaries - joint brainstorming

d. Organisational demands

- Paragraph scaffolds
- Text scaffolds
- Writing process proformas
  - E.g. POWER, editing checklists

7. Meta is better

- Development of a shared language for talking about language is a specific objective of the K-6 English syllabus
7. Meta is better

K-6 Stage 1. Outcomes and Indicators
- Discusses some of the different purposes for which people write
- Recognises organisational structure of some text types
- Examines stages of a text and discusses their functions
- Talks about how own procedures have been structured and how action words have been used

8. Review, review, review

Teach
1. Frequently
2. Explicitly
3. Specifically
4. Parts and whole
5. Manipulatively
6. Metalinguistically
7. Repetitively
What doesn’t work

- Focus on studying parts of speech and sentence fragments
- Simple sentence combining (needs to be in context)
- Attempting to emulate good writing without explicit modeling and teaching
- Telling students to ‘try’ again

Martello, 2001; Baker et al., 2003