

Writing with some pupils in my Year 1 class

Natalie Walker

[@natwalk87](#)

Background:

Early Years Practitioner, Bed Open with OU, In my 3rd year of teaching. I am currently a Year 1 teacher.

Principle(s) in focus:

Explain which principle(s) of a *Writing For Pleasure* pedagogy you've been investigating and has had a positive impact on your teaching:

- [Be a writer-teacher](#)

Aims:

I was primarily aiming to ensure my pupils could see the metacognitive processes of writing through observing an authentic writing experience during play based learning time.

Description:

I engage regularly with Twitter and one day a couple of weeks ago I came across a tweet by Ben Harris ([@one to read](#)). I knew his tweet would benefit my teaching in some way so I clicked on it! He shared a photo of a piece of writing that he had written which he then read to his class. The underlying message of the tweet was to show our pupils the authenticity of writing and being a writer-teacher.

I decided to try this in my own practice during an afternoon of continuous provision. One of my pupils struggles with writing and his confidence is very low. He was my prime candidate for a little bit of action research to see if crafting and sharing my own writing alongside him actually has an impact! We sat at the writing table. I told him that I was going to sit with him and write my own story. He knew that he could ask for help if he needed me but ultimately, I was writing my very own story too. I got a pencil and piece of paper and started to write. I kept repeating my sentence out loud and *showing* the metacognitive processes of writing e.g. reading my writing back to myself, looking up a tricky word on a word mat, saying out loud what I was thinking of writing next, and putting in finger spaces.

Another pupil came to the table with his book and said that he wanted to do some writing too and sat down next to us. We were all writing away until I needed to stop for a bit to give myself some time to think. He said "Mrs Walker, I don't know what to write now". I told him neither did I but I was going to look at my picture and read back to him what I'd written so far to see if I could think of anything else I wanted to write. We both carried on. On two occasions my colleague interrupted me mid flow and I found myself quite irritated! This helped me to see that as writers, we all have our own level of tolerance for distractions. I know that in the future I will make sure I do not interrupt my pupils if they are fully engaged.

At the end of the day we all gathered together and I told the class I had something special to show them on the white board. They read my writing, saw I had crossed bits out, made mistakes, and had to work through a minor case of writer's block! I asked my pupils how it made them feel to see that I had taken part in the same writing I asked them to do and they said "proud", "impressed", "happy" and "comforted".

Impact:

The next day, the pupil who was sat with me took his book and independently finished his story, he filled a whole A4 page with his own writing and he spelt several common exception words correctly. I suspect this happened because he had watched me the day before. He was so proud of himself!

Reflection:

This small example of practice has shown me the importance of positioning ourselves as writers. We too are 'students of writing'. In this way, we can redress some of the implicit power we hold as educators. The authenticity of being a writer-teacher comes from being humble and showing how we too have to work out what to write and how best to write it. Writing is a messy business. It's a cognitive challenge and it is a creative and emotional challenge. We can ONLY understand this if we go through the writing process with our pupils. And above all; our pupils are comforted by watching our successes and struggles.

I am privileged to learn from such fabulous little humans every day and writing alongside them has shown me how to become a better, more impactful teacher.

I am now looking into strategies such as this which will encourage children; boys in particular to write for pleasure in school.