What does a knowledge-based writing curriculum involve?

The Writing For Pleasure Centre
- Promoting research-informed writing teaching

Writerly knowledge is all the things writers know about writing and being a writer. But what is it they know, and why might it be important for our students to know this stuff too?

In our book *Writing For Pleasure: theory, research and practice*, we consider what a knowledge-rich writing curriculum would include. We believe it's important that pupils know **the craft knowledge** involved in creating texts, including:

- **Process knowledge**, knowledge about the processes, procedures, strategies, and techniques writers employ as they go through their writing process, generating ideas, planning, drafting, revising, editing, publishing, and performing.
- **Genre knowledge**, the typical textual, linguistic, literary and grammatical features genres employ to be at their most meaningful and successful.
- **Goal knowledge**, how writers set themselves goals and manage their writing deadlines.
- **Knowledge about their reader**, how writers will meditate on the purpose for their writing, gather information about and consider their future readership.
- **Knowledge about a writerly environment**, how writers live and work with others, and the conditions which are conducive to writing productively and happily.
- **Transcriptional knowledge**, including spelling and punctuation conventions and keyboard and handwriting skills.
- **Knowledge of how writers use their reading**, including how they read to enhance their craft knowledge and search for content material.
- **Knowledge of technology and other modalities.**
- **Knowledge of the affective domains** considered by writers as they craft and publish texts.These include giving attention to their confidence, motivation, desire, competence and their personal and collective responsibilities.

(Young & Ferguson 2021 p.188)

A knowledge-based writing curriculum is essential because, without such knowledge, it's hard for us to answer the following sorts of important questions:

- If I gave my class two hours of writing time, would they **know** what to do with it?
- Do I think students in my school would **know** how to generate a seed of an idea and see it through to publication or performance successfully?
- Are my students going to **know** enough to be able to live the writer's life after they leave my school?

In a knowledge-rich writing classroom, you'd expect positive answers to these questions. For example, students would know how to manage their writing process. They would have ready strategies to help them find an idea they were *moved* to write about. They would also know how to generate this 'seed of an idea' and see it through to successful performance or publication. They would know how important it is to consider the purpose(s) their writing is to serve, who their audience will be and therefore what this audience's expectations might include. They would know which genre(s) would best support their intentions and what the typical features and conventions of those genres are (importantly, they would know that they can play with or break these conventions too). They would know how to manage their time by setting themselves process goals (things they want to get done) and product goals (strategies or techniques they want to employ in their writing to make it as meaningful and as successful as it can be).

Notably, they would know what to do when they don't know what to do. They would know how to use their writing environment productively to solve their writing problems - including where they can access resources, and how to use them. They would also know how to lean on their writer-teacher, friends and peers for support.

They would know what sort of transcriptional conventions their readership would expect to see and would ensure their writing was as accurate as they could make it before publication. They would know how to use technology to help them in their writing process (for example: how to research for writing material, how technology can help them attend to their spellings or word choices, including using Google, online thesauruses and electronic spell checkers). They would also know how to use technology to support their publishing choices, for example through word processing, presentations, blogs and video or audio recordings.

They would know how to manage themselves. They would keep in mind why they were moved to write their piece in the first place. Even when the writing was hard, they would remember that there is a gratification to be had in that struggle. They would remember that, actually, writing is an intoxicating and satisfying way of life. They would use proven strategies to keep themselves motivated. They would also know what their personal and collective responsibilities to the class are as a community of writers living, writing and working together.

Finally, and most importantly, they would know how to successfully live a writer's life after leaving school. If they wanted or needed to, they could live the writer's life for economic reasons (knowing how to write with authority, daring and originality is great currency). They could decide to live the writer's life for political or civic reasons - sharing their knowledge and opinions with clarity and imagination. I also hope they would write for personal reasons - as an act of reflection or record keeping. Finally, I would want them to know how to write for reasons of pure pleasure and recreation - feeling a sense of joy and accomplishment in sharing their artistry, identity and knowledge with others in ways that are profound and confident.

We share how Writing For Pleasure schools try to develop this knowledge in our new publication: *The BIG book of mini-lessons: lessons that teach powerful craft knowledge for 3-11 year olds*.

The Writing For Pleasure Centre's

Big Book Of Writing Mini-Lessons

Lessons That Teach Powerful Craft Knowledge For 3-11 Year Olds

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