



**The Writing For Pleasure Centre**

- Promoting research-informed writing teaching

# Children As Writers Survey Guidance

**Ross Young, Benjamin Harris & Felicity Ferguson**

# The Writing For Pleasure Centre

The mission of The Writing For Pleasure Centre is to help all young people become passionate and successful writers. We look to accomplish this goal by investigating what world-class writing teaching might be. We do this through:

- Our school residencies and teacher training workshops.
- Curriculum development and creating resources.
- Conducting, disseminating and publishing research.
- Working with children, teachers, school leaders, teacher-educators and charities.



We have developed this research-rich website to share the most effective teaching practices. It's our hope that teachers regard The Writing For Pleasure Centre website as a place where they can access a specialist network and continued professional development that is free.

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## The Research Base

For the past fifty years, research has been consistent on what makes great writing teaching. Despite this, we as teachers can be inundated by a variety of approaches and training, all promising a lot but often lacking the necessary grounding to be successful in the long-term. This is why our website and pedagogy is based on the following:

- Extensive scientific research into the most effective writing instruction.
- Case studies of what the best performing teachers of writing do that makes the difference.
- Our own research into a *Writing For Pleasure* pedagogy.
- The wisdom of professional writers.

If you're new to the idea of a *Writing For Pleasure* pedagogy, you can read all about it at **[writing4pleasure.com](http://writing4pleasure.com)**

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The Writing For Pleasure Centre functions both as a think tank and as an action research community. The result is that we are continually engaged in sharing effective practices, case studies and research findings.

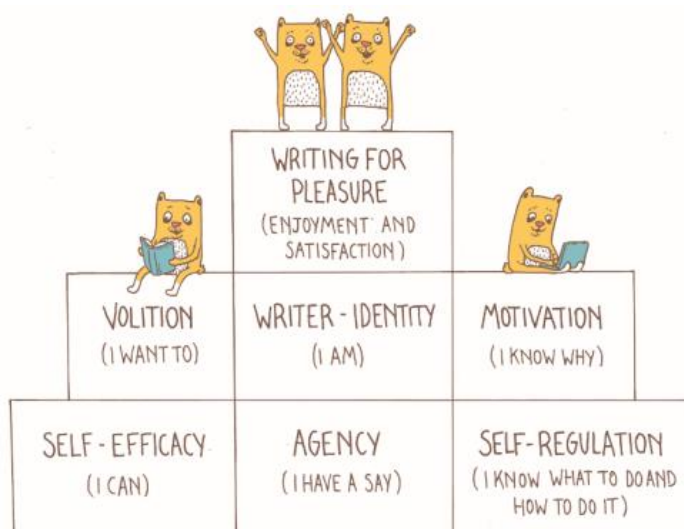
*The authors have dedicated a great deal of time and effort to writing the content of this booklet, and their written expression is protected by copyright law. We respectfully ask that you do not adapt, reuse, or copy anything on third-party (whether for-profit or not-for-profit) lesson-sharing websites. This resource is for the purchasing institution only. As always, we are happy to answer any questions you may have at [literacyforpleasure@gmail.com](mailto:literacyforpleasure@gmail.com)*

# Introduction

**A *Writing For Pleasure* pedagogy is nothing less than the pursuit of world-class writing teaching.**

**- Young & Ferguson 2021**

At The Writing For Pleasure Centre, the idea that children can be taught exceptionally well *and* enjoy the craft of writing is at the heart of everything we do. Indeed, research consistently shows a profound link between children writing with and for pleasure and exceptional academic achievement. World-class writing teachers focus on developing high levels of **self-efficacy, self-regulation, agency, motivation, volition, writer-identity, enjoyment** and **satisfaction** in their apprentice writers. They do this because development of these affective needs makes a bigger difference to children's performance, well-being and learning than anything else (Young & Ferguson [2021](#)).



(Young & Ferguson's hierarchy of affective writing needs [2021](#))

This survey will help you discover where your *Writing For Pleasure* practice is strong and will also give you guidance and ideas on how to improve.

## How to administer the survey

It's good to avoid children feeling that they have to respond to the survey in the same way as their peers. It's also important that children don't feel a need to give positive responses to make you happy. Ask the children to give their honest opinion to the questions and tell them that the survey is about making their learning experience the best it can be and your teaching the best it can be. Feel free to talk to the children about the questions and what they might mean prior to filling the survey out. Finally, assistant teachers are welcome to support individual children to complete the survey if you feel they need it.

# How to use the analysis tool

It's important that this analysis tool should be used only as a guide for teachers' interest in the attitudes and perceptions of individuals, groups and their whole class. It is not intended to be any kind of formal scoring system. The analysis tool is, however, a useful way to track patterns in individual and class attitudes and how these might change over time.

1. Input the number of children who took part in the survey in cell B16.

Number in Survey
4

2. Input children's names into cells B21-54.

3. For each child, simply input the score according to the box they have circled or ticked.

Never = 1

Sometimes = 2

Most of the time = 3

Always = 4

4. Once you have inputted the scores for all 18 questions, return to Questions 5, 6, 9, 10, 13. These questions award points ***in the opposite way to all the others*** (The columns for these questions have been colour coded to highlight this).

Change 1 to 4

Change 2 to 3

Change 3 to 2

Change 4 to 1

5. For the last written question, you can award a score using your own judgement, from 1 - 4

1 = for a wholly negative response (*I hate writing!*)

2 = for a mildly negative response (*Is this writing going to be boring?*)

3 = for a mildly positive response (*OK fine let's write*)

4 = wholly positive response (*Yay! My favourite lesson!*)

6. You can view each child's final average attitude score in column V.

V
Attitude (score)
Very Positive
Positive
Mild Positive
Mild Negative
Negative

7. You can also see your whole class report by clicking the '**Go To My Report**' button and this can be saved and printed off for your records.

**Go To My Report**

8. Your whole class report will help you to identify key areas which are particularly strong or weak in your teaching practice. On the next page, we provide guidance on interpreting what your report means and give suggestions on how you might be able to improve your *Writing For Pleasure* teaching in the different areas.
9. Finally, it's really important that you rely on a whole host of instruments to try and understand your children as writers. With this in mind, we also recommend that you talk regularly with your class about how writing is going, use our ***Interview Questions***, and undertake the [Writing Rivers](#) and [Taking The Temperature](#) writing activities.

# Interpreting your results and next steps.

## Enjoyment

### Mild Positive, Positive, Very Positive

According to the data, your class enjoys writing! There can be a number of reasons for this but it's usually due to the following things. Children feel confident and happy when they are writing. They feel they have a say over what they write, how they write it and they feel that they are listened to. You may regularly invite them to write about things they are interested in, passionate about or knowledgeable of. They also know what to do and how to do it. Importantly, they also know what they should do when they *don't* know what to do. You have a class of happy writers who feel they can write well. Finally, according to the National Literacy Trust, children who enjoy writing are eight times more likely to write above the expected standard.

### Very Low, Low, Mild Low

The data shows that overall your class doesn't enjoy writing. There can be a number of reasons for this but it's usually due to the following things. Children don't feel confident or competent when they are doing their writing. They don't feel like they have much of a say in the writing classroom. They aren't typically invited to write about things they are interested in, passionate about or knowledgeable of. Finally, they are often confused and don't feel like they know what to do, how to do it, or why they are doing it. They don't feel they can write well on their own and they don't identify themselves as genuine and successful writers. This has real consequences. According to the National Literacy Trust, children who don't enjoy writing are seven times more likely to write below the expected standard. Don't worry though! This document provides you with lots of practical advice to help you increase your class' writing for pleasure.

### Questions Worth Asking Yourself:

How do you know when children are genuinely enjoying working on a piece of writing?

What do your class talk about and how do they act when they feel proud of the writing they've crafted?

What do children in your class enjoy most about the writing they do?

In what ways do you make children feel good about themselves as writers?

## Self-Efficacy

### Mild High, High, Very High

Brilliant news, your class are confident writers with good levels of self-esteem and self-belief. We know that self-efficacy is important to children's academic success and their personal well-being. When children have high-levels of self-efficacy, they are more likely to generate successful writing and write accurately. Confident writers are more likely to participate, they put in more effort, they try out more demanding writing techniques, set themselves more ambitious goals, and have a greater desire to write.

### Very Low, Low, Mild Low

Unfortunately, your class is currently suffering from very low writing confidence and self-esteem. Self-efficacy is important to children's academic success and personal well-being. When children are suffering from low levels of self-esteem they tend to dislike writing, they hold negative views about themselves as writers and can feel really depressed. However, when children have high-levels of self-efficacy, they are more likely to generate successful writing and write accurately. Confident writers are more likely to participate, they put in more effort, they try out more demanding writing techniques, set themselves more ambitious goals, and have a greater desire to write.

Here are some things you can do to improve the feelings of self-efficacy in your classroom:

- Create a happy, sociable writing classroom where children are given plenty of time to talk about their writing with each other.
- Don't put high-stakes pressure on your class by having a 'one-chance perfect-product' mentality towards writing. Give children time and space to work on their writing and explain that we get better over time and with repeated practice.
- Give children plenty of time to share, read, receive praise and act on advice from you and their friends.
- Ensure that your writing projects are serving a real purpose and are going to be received by real audiences. As much as possible, make sure pupils hear about the impact their writing has had on their readership.
- Don't overload children. Don't expect them to draft, revise and edit their writing all at the same time. Give them separate and ample time to focus on each of these important processes.
- Let children decide where their writing should be published and who it should go to.
- Set product goals all together as a whole class. Don't write the success criteria for a project away from your pupils.
- Before they start writing, invite children to set their own target of what they would like to achieve by the end of the writing session.
- Start teaching responsively. Regularly ask your class what they feel they need instruction in and teach them about it.
- At the beginning of each writing lesson, teach children something and invite them to try it out during that day's writing time.
- When you talk to a child about their writing, always tell them what struck you about it. Tell them what their writing strengths are and what your personal response was to their writing.

### Questions Worth Asking Yourself:

How do you model writing confidence?

How do you try and give children writing confidence?

How do you ensure children keep in mind what the end goal for a writing project is?

How do help children understand that they can use what they've learnt previously in their present writing project?

How do you help children understand that writers get better through repeated meaningful practice and over a long period of time?

## Self-Regulation

### Mild High, High, Very High

Brilliant news, your class feel like competent and independent writers who know what to do, and importantly, how to do it. We know that building up children's sense of competence and independence is important to their academic performance and feelings of pleasure. When children have high-levels of self-regulation, they are better able to transfer learning from one writing project to another, manage their own writing, use their writing environment productively, check for themselves that their writing attends to set writing goals, and can review, revise and proof-read their manuscripts to a high-level of sophistication independently.

### Very Low, Low, Mild Low

Unfortunately, at the moment, your class feels confused when they are writing. They don't know what to do or how to do it for themselves. They don't feel they are in control or that they can write well on their own. Children who lack self-regulation can feel isolated and that they don't belong. They often lack strategies to sustain a piece of writing. They use avoidance tactics, hide their work and spend as little time as possible writing. When children have high-levels of self-regulation, they are better able to transfer learning from one writing project to another, manage their own writing, use their writing environment productively, check for themselves that their writing attends to set writing goals, and can review, revise and proof-read their manuscripts to a high level of sophistication independently.

You may do many of these things already but here are some suggestions on how you can improve feelings of self-regulation in your classroom:

- Teach mini-lessons on how they can help each other during writing time.
- Ensure that your writing environment is organised, that behavioural expectations are clear, and that it provides resources that can do the work of the teacher.
- Once a writing strategy, process, technique or resource has been introduced to the class, invite children to try it out during that day's writing time.
- Set writing goals for a class writing project collaboratively with your class so everyone feels they know what has to be done to produce a successful and meaningful text. Once children know what has to be done, teach daily mini-lessons on how to achieve the set goals before inviting children to carry it out during that day's writing time.
- Ask children to set themselves a process goal (something they want to get done) during writing time each day.
- Ensure children are writing meaningfully for a sustained amount of time every day.
- Dedicate mini-lessons on how to use any resources that are introduced into the writing classroom.
- Demonstrate to children the things you do that help you write happily.
- When pupil-conferencing, share strategies with children and walk away - ensuring that they are the ones applying what's been taught.

### Questions Worth Asking Yourself:

How does your classroom environment support children to develop their independence and skills as a writer?

Can children draft a piece of writing happily and independently?

How do you celebrate children's writing processes?

How do you ensure children don't feel overloaded and overburdened when they are planning, drafting, revising, editing and publishing their texts?

Do you teach revision and editing strategies that children can independently apply?



## Agency

### Mild High, High, Very High

Well done, your class feels like they own their writing, they have control over its content, and that they are given personal responsibility and a voice within the writing classroom. Having agency improves children's engagement and their writing performance. When children are given control over their writing ideas and process, they are more likely to exceed expectations, connect better with new text-types, show more perseverance, put in more effort and are more likely to steer their writing towards the goals of curriculum objectives. Finally, children who are given the freedom to choose their own topics for class writing projects write more logical, better organised and more accomplished texts.

### Very Low, Low, Mild Low

At the present moment, your class doesn't feel like they have much control or ownership over their writing. Having agency improves children's engagement and their writing performance. When children are given control over their writing ideas and process, they are more likely to exceed expectations, connect better with new text-types, show more perseverance, put in more effort and are more likely to steer their writing towards the goals of curriculum objectives. Finally, children who are given the freedom to choose their own topics for class writing projects write more logical, better organised and more accomplished texts.

Here are some things you can do to improve the feelings of agency in your classroom:

- Let children participate in devising what their class writing projects could be and who they would like to write for.
- Invite children to generate their own ideas of what they would like to write about within class writing projects. Children can generate ideas on their own, in pairs, with friends, in groups, or as a whole class.
- Let children write on subjects they are most interested in, passionate about, or knowledgeable of.
- Ensure children get to participate in the setting of product goals for a class writing project.
- Give children regular and ample time to pursue their own personal writing projects.
- Allow children to have a writing notebook that can go between home and school.

### Questions Worth Asking Yourself:

Who decides on the class' writing projects?

Do you know how the different children in your class prefer to write?

How do you ensure children are invited to generate their own writing ideas for class writing projects?

Is there a symbiosis between children's home and school writing?

How do you share the different ways writers approach the writing process? How do you let children choose the way they write best?

Are children given time to develop their personal writing projects at home and at school?

## Motivation

### Mildly Positive, Positive, Very Positive

Great news, your class finds writing interesting, and they engage with and value the writing they do in school. Their writing brings them a sense of personal pride and satisfaction. They feel writing is relevant and important to their lives in the here and now. They know why they are writing and who they are writing for. Your class has a natural curiosity for writing. They take delight in showing persistence. They love working hard over time and seeing their writing ideas through to formal publication or performance. They stay motivated and committed to their writing over many sessions. They care about their writing doing well and want their readers to appreciate it. Finally, we know there is a profound relationship between motivation and academic performance.

### Very Negative, Negative, Mildly Negative

It would appear that at the moment your class doesn't find writing interesting, nor do they want to engage with it. Their writing rarely brings them a sense of personal pride and satisfaction but instead is done as a 'schooled activity'. They don't feel writing is relevant and important to their lives in the here and now. It's likely that they often don't know why they are writing and who they are writing for. As a result, they find it hard to stay motivated over many writing sessions. There is a profound relationship between motivation and academic performance. A lack of motivation is too often at the heart of writing underperformance and should be given just as much focus by teachers as they give to children's cognitive learning. Children make less academic progress when they are forced to write about things they are not motivated by. Boys regularly find the projects their teachers come up with to be very demotivating. Teachers can negatively affect children's motivation if they express excessive concern, anxiety and pressure. Finally, poorly motivated children expect punishment, fear making mistakes, experience feelings of guilt, find writing difficult and are unable to concentrate. They produce low-level writing with the focus being on not making 'mistakes'. In contrast, children who are motivated, enjoy challenging themselves, feel better about school and write better texts.

Here are some things you can do to improve motivation in your classroom:

- Have a really positive attitude towards writing and being a writer yourself. Children copy the levels of motivation their teachers feel for being a writer.
- Being allowed to write, talk and learn from other writers in an open and social writing classroom can improve children's motivation.
- Allow the needs of the curriculum to meet the things children are motivated to write about.
- Ensure children's writing is read by real anticipated audiences.
- Engaging teachers explain the relevance of their writing instruction in helping the children write successful and meaningful texts.
- Set product goals for a class writing project with your class. Help children to see how they are achieving these goals as they craft their compositions towards publication and performance.
- Set writing deadlines for completing different processes towards publication and performance and celebrate when these deadlines are achieved.
- Allow children to draw on their own funds of knowledge, interests, out-of-school cultures, opinions and imaginative ideas for class writing projects.
- Always share your personal response to a child's writing before offering any advice or instruction.

### Questions Worth Asking Yourself:

Who are the audiences your children write for throughout the year?

Do you share when you've been *moved* to write and do you share what you've written?

Who do your children want to write for?

Do you ask your children what writing projects they would like to pursue?

Do you have publishing parties to celebrate the publication or performance of class writing projects?

Do your writers get to hear from their readers and how they reacted to their writing at the end of a project?

Do you set writing goals and flexible writing deadlines for children to complete on the road to publication and performance?

## Volition

### Mild High, High, Very High

Congratulations, your pupils feel a strong urge and desire to write. They think about and talk about writing when they're not writing. Writing is on their mind in and out of school. It is part of their lives. As a result, your class enjoys learning more about the craft, skills and knowledge involved in writing and being a writer. You obviously teach your class not only *how* to write but how to *want* to write. For the children in your class, the benefits and satisfactions that come from writing outweigh the considerable time and effort it takes to craft it. Children who feel a strong volition to write become utterly absorbed in the activity - so much so that they fail to notice the passing of time. They set themselves high standards and have no fear of failure.

### Very Low, Low, Mild Low

Your class data shows that your pupils don't really want to write. They see it largely as a school-based task and don't give it much thought. As a result, your class isn't particularly interested in learning more about the craft, skills and knowledge involved in being a writer. You may teach your class *how* to write but maybe need to give more attention to teaching them how to *want* to write. For the children in your class, the time and effort it takes to craft writing doesn't yield them enough pleasure or satisfaction for them to feel it is worthwhile. Children who feel a strong volition to write become utterly absorbed in the activity - so much so that they fail to notice the passing of time. They set themselves high standards and have no fear of failure. However, children can often lose their urge to write when their teacher places too many external demands on their writing all at the same time. Such practices can include: relying too heavily on writing prompts or scheme-assigned writing tasks, setting up inauthentic reasons to write, creating a high-stakes perfect-product writing atmosphere and putting your focus on transcriptional accuracy too early into a child's process.

Here are some things you can do to improve children's volition to write:

- A great way to honour children's urge to write is to respond to their natural enthusiasms. Give children a voice in the conception and planning of class writing projects.
- Focus on children's voice and the content of their writing during the early stages of their process. Turn your attention towards their transcriptional accuracy when they are preparing their writing for publication or performance.
- Give children ample and sustained time to pursue personal writing projects away from the pressures of whole class writing projects.
- By sharing the ways you've been *moved* to write, children will feel an itch to write too.
- Allow volitional reading time to lead into some volitional writing time. Allow children to write when inspired by the texts *they* are choosing to read.

### Questions Worth Asking Yourself:

What makes the children who scored highest in your questionnaire feel a need to write?

What makes your children want to write most?

Do you give children opportunities to write when they are inspired by the things *they* are choosing to read, watch or play in and out of school?

## Writer-identity

### Mildly Positive, Positive, Very Positive

Your data indicates that your pupils have strong writer-identities. They believe they are writers and they believe they write as writers write. Children who see themselves as writers are more likely to redraft, work on their writing of their own accord, write outside of school and show extraordinary involvement and investment in their written work. They live the writer's life. Your classroom is effective because it must allow children to practise all the things a writer really does. It must feel like a creative writer's workshop *and* a professional publishing house. It's likely that you encourage children's identities to enter their writing. As a result, children are more efficient and attend more effectively to the objectives of the curriculum.

### Mildly Negative, Negative, Very Negative

Your data indicates that your class don't hold strong writer-identities. They don't necessarily believe themselves to be writers and they don't think they are writing as writers truly write. Children who see themselves as writers are more likely to redraft, work on their writing of their accord, write outside of school and show extraordinary involvement and investment in their written work. However, it's unlikely that many of your pupils are living what we would call 'the writer's life'. Your classroom might not be as effective as it could be because it doesn't allow children to practise all the things a writer really does. It might be that you don't allow children's identities to enter their writing as much as you could. As a result, children might find it harder to attend to the objectives of the curriculum.

Here are some things you can do to nurture children's writer-identities:

- Start to define yourselves as a class of writers who meet every day to craft writing for a variety of readers.
- Treat your classroom as a mixture of creative writer's workshop and professional and serious publishing house.
- Teach children the things writers do before you concentrate on teaching the specific types of writing. Teach children about all the writing processes: how to generate ideas, plan, draft, revise, edit, publish and perform.
- Continually monitor how your students respond to your style of teaching, converse with them about how you could make your writing teaching better, and make adjustments based on their feedback.
- Through daily mini-lessons, teach children the things writers do.
- Give children writer's notebooks that can go to and from school so that children can live the writer's life.
- Set up a daily writing routines and disciplines similar to that of professional writers. Ensure that everyday children are given a sustained period in which to talk, write and share their writing and learn something useful and interesting about writing.
- Reflect on the fact that children learn how to be a writer when they are taught by a writer-teacher. A writer teacher is a writer who teaches and a teacher who writes.
- Have regular conversations with your pupils about what it's like being a writer. Show that you are learning as much from them as they are learning from you.
- Surround children with excellent books and a diverse classroom library and give them ample time in which to read.

### Questions Worth Asking Yourself:

How do you make children feel like writers?

How do you role model the writer's life?

Do your class writing projects reflect the reasons writers write outside the classroom?

How do you make children feel that they are part of a community of writers in your classroom?

Do you and your class explore your favourite author's writing processes?

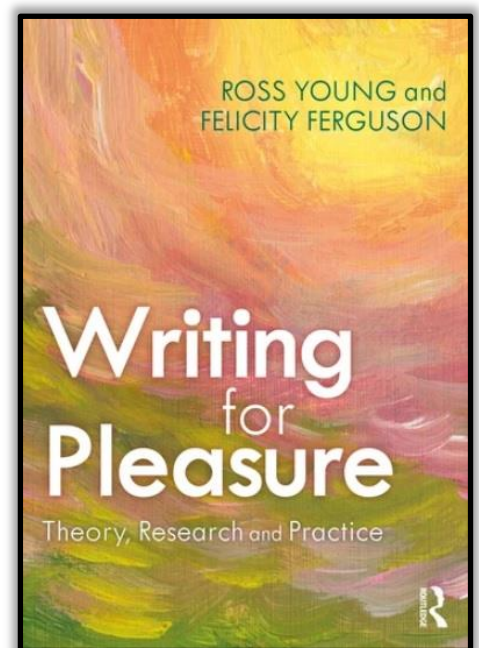
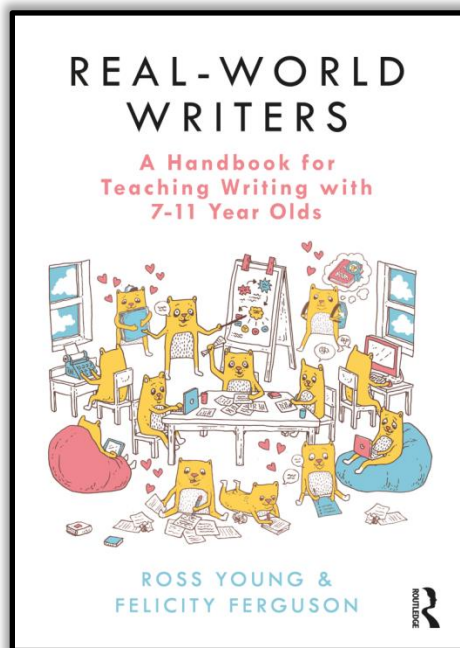
Do the texts children write reflect their lives? Do the texts children read reflect their lives?

Do children know that they are writers in the here and now or do they hold the misconception that you can only be a writer if you're famous or commercially published?

Do children have ample and daily time for reading?

Do they know that many types of writer exist for many different purposes or do they just think writing is for novelists and poets?

## Further Reading



## And finally...

If you're interested in developing your writing teaching further, we offer a wide-range of evidence-informed CPD including our popular school residency programme, teacher workshops and multi-day institutes. Find out more at [www.writing4pleasure.com/training](http://www.writing4pleasure.com/training)

# CPD

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