

Making and Shaping Meaning Through Writing

School: Wenona

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1. Executive Summary

The primary objective of Wenona's Making and Shaping Meaning Through Writing Project ('Writing Project') was to investigate the effectiveness of targeted approaches for improving writing proficiency among late primary and early to mid-secondary students. The two-year project aimed to examine how such an approach impacts student confidence and achievement, as well as the effectiveness of the instructional capacity of teachers in developing literacy skills across multiple curriculum areas (other than English).

Wenona is a 138-year-old independent girls' school located in the lower North Shore of Sydney with over 1363 students enrolled from Kindergarten (5 years old) to Year 12 (17-18 years old). Proudly non-selective, Wenona ranks highly in the competitive Higher School Certificate assessment process. It continually invests in teachers' professional growth and development to ensure that the focus remains on the value of women's education. Wenona engaged in this project in response to the stagnation and decline in Australian students' writing abilities over the past decade (AERO, 2022). Literacy proficiency plays a critical role in enabling students to reach their full potential and participate fully in life beyond school.

Evidence based research, relating to both the delivery of professional learning to teachers and writing instruction, was used to inform the project design. At the project commencement, the research question for the study was: *Would the implementation of consistent cross-curricular writing strategies across Stages 3, 4 & 5 improve confidence and skill (student and teacher) as well as student writing achievement levels?*

For data collection purposes, approximately 11 teachers and 39 students were involved, with significant volumes of data being gathered from a diverse range of sources. These included baseline and final interviews with the teachers and students, student writing samples and teaching and learning interventions trialled by teachers.

The scope of the project was ambitious at the outset. To ensure that the project impact was sustainable, and the analysis and reporting stage of the project was manageable within set timeframes, the final stage of this action research has been split into 2 distinct phases. These are:

- a. Stage 1 - determine the effectiveness of the project's interventions on teachers' confidence and competence to contextualise writing instruction within the teaching of content knowledge. This is the focus of this report.
- b. Stage 2 - determine the impact on student writing competence. This work is ongoing and will continue into 2025.

Prior to commencing the collection of data in Term 4 2023 and drawing on the expertise and widely published research of our academic mentors, a shared pedagogical understanding and knowledge of literacy strategies was created. A consistent framework of instructional strategies and a shared metalanguage was developed to build the collective efficacy in the teaching of writing across faculties and learning stages. The Junior School utilised Beverley Derewianka and Pauline Jones' teaching and learning cycle from *Teaching Language in Context* which was referred to as the '*Learning Cycle*'. The Senior School refined and adapted this approach, referring to it as the '*The Three Pillars Instructional Framework*'.

Professional learning for all teachers involved in the project was sustained throughout the two-year project period, aiming to develop their confidence and effectiveness in contextualising

writing instruction within the teaching of content knowledge. This involved the Stage 3 teaching team and in the secondary school, Stages 4 and 5 teachers in the project curriculum areas of Geography, History, Science and PDHPE. A deliberate decision was made to involve these faculties (and not the English faculty), with cohort-wide classes, to build a broader awareness of the responsibility for teaching writing being a shared, whole-school one.

At the project outset, we expected the results to show an improvement in both teacher confidence and student writing ability, as well as a positive change in school culture regarding the use of research to reflect on and refine teaching practice. This has been moderately successful. Both Senior and Junior School classroom teachers now have an increased awareness of, and confidence to, share the responsibility of teaching students to write well, as well as knowledge of a shared framework and metalanguage for collaborative conversations about this. The impact on student writing skills is yet to be determined and analysis will be completed in Stage 2 of this project in 2025. As with all schools, the complexity of daily business and competing priorities, particularly release time and resourcing, has constrained the project from reaching its aspirational aims.

Wenona is grateful for the opportunity to have participated in such a large action research project. By developing a model of pedagogically informed writing strategies drawing on both current Australian and international best practice, Wenona hopes to contribute to the broader educational community's understanding of how writing can be taught more effectively.

The significant impact of working with our academic mentors on teaching practice is evident, undoubtedly improving the instructional practice of classroom teachers. It has also helped to shape the culture of the school relating to the use of evidence to improve the contextualisation of writing instruction. The merit of Wenona's work in this area was recognised in August 2024 by an Australian Council for Educational Leaders with the NSW Team Leadership Award and through an invitation to present at the annual 2023 Primary English Teaching Association Australia conference.



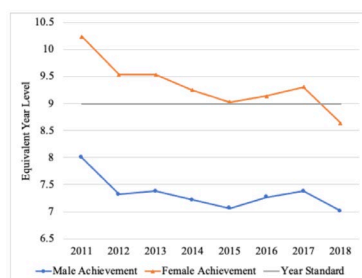
2. Introduction/Background

Background

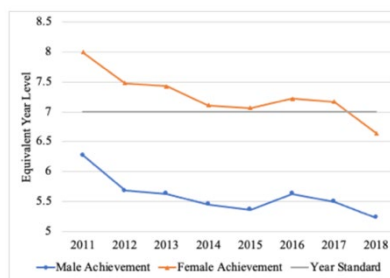
The aim of the Writing Project was to study whether targeted approaches to improving writing proficiency in designated cross-curricular areas in Stages 3, 4 and 5 are effective, in terms of positively impacting both student confidence and achievement, and teacher writing instructional capacity. Wenona was interested in using an evidence informed approach to improving writing skills school-wide and this project enabled a suitable professional learning and writing framework to be developed and piloted.

Writing is complex, requiring significant instruction and practice (Australian Education Research Organisation [AERO] 2022, p11). And yet there is no agreement among writing experts about what constitutes an exemplar writing curriculum in Australia (AERO 2022 p16). This is concerning, as there has been no improvement in the writing abilities of students in Years 3 and 5, and a moderate decline in the writing abilities of students in Years 7 and 9, over the last 10 years (McGaw et al 2020, as per AERO 2022, p11).

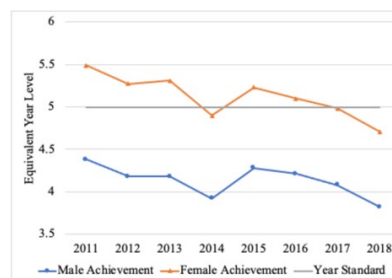
Year 9 writing achievement by gender, 2011-2018



Year 7 writing achievement by gender, 2011-2018



Year 5 writing achievement by gender, 2011-2018



Source: <https://www.aare.edu.au/blog/?p=7870>

Ineffective writing instruction may well be a significant cause for the considerable decline in Australian students' performance on the National Assessment Program—Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) writing test (Thomas, 2020). A very real concern is that Australian teachers appear to be lacking a coherent, shared body of knowledge in the writing domain (AERO, 2022, p17). This highlights the need for a national conversation about how we might effectively teach and assess writing (Thomas, 2020) because a student's literacy and numeracy skills underpin their future workforce participation and productivity (NSW Government). The OECD Learning Compass 2030 recognises the integral role literacy, as a cognitive foundation, plays in enabling students to fully participate in the global, interconnected and digital world of the future. It therefore follows that low writing proficiency may impact the ability of students to achieve their full potential (OECD, n.d.).

Trends identified in Wenona's NAPLAN results similarly reflect the need to focus on building the writing proficiency of students and the writing instructional capacity of classroom teachers. Anecdotal data, including discussions, classroom experience and observations within Wenona, also provides a unique insight into the performance anxiety students experience due to a lack of confidence in their writing ability. This challenge is not unique to Wenona. PISA 2015 Results Well-being Report confirms that student anxiety related to the completion of school tasks and tests is common, especially for students who have low confidence in their skills (Zeidner, 2007 as cited in OECD, 2017).

Students do not write and compose frequently enough, and teachers do not spend enough time teaching the skills and strategies required for students to write well (AERO 2022 p12). This absence of frequent instruction in the first 4 years of secondary school may contribute to our understanding of the decline in the writing abilities of students in Years 7 and 9, as measured by NAPLAN (Wyatt-Smith et al, 2018). Writing proficiency is integral to student achievement during the school years and it influences personal and vocational outcomes post-school (Graham 2006 & Graham 2019 as per AERO, 2022, p6). And yet there is a lack of 'high quality and large-scale research in the Australian context' (AERO, 2022, p5) informing instructional teaching and learning routines. It is for this reason that one key focus of this project is to better understand pedagogically sound ways to enhance the capacity of teachers to teach writing within the context of their subject area.

Teachers need to make 'discipline specific ways of using language explicit' as a means of developing 'disciplinary literacies across academic content areas' (Fang & Schleppegrell, 2010). Given the current focus of high stakes testing regimes on written assessments, it is important that we extend 'our ways of knowing about how to best teach writing' (Myhill, 2010) because although students can write, 'what most students cannot do is write well' (National Commission on Writing in America's Schools and Colleges, 2003).

Rationale

The vision underpinning a Wenona education is the empowerment of young women, in a global learning community, to serve and shape their world. The Writing Project had two significant goals, aiming to positively impact:

- the confidence and skill of teachers to contextualise writing instruction within the teaching of content knowledge; and
- the confidence and academic capability of students, thereby equipping them with the tools needed to engage fully in, and contribute to, the world beyond school.

The targeted year groups benefiting from this research were late primary and early to mid-secondary in AISNSW schools, so that students can engage in, and feel more confident about, their writing when learning and to also use writing as a tool to deepen their learning of new content.



3. Literature Review

Writing instruction – the need for a shared and clear approach

Contemporary schooling calls for powerful literacy capabilities (Freebody, 2007, p67), as Australia ‘is both literacy-saturated and literacy dependent’ (Freebody, 2007, p3). Whilst a person’s success in education, the workplace and broader society is strongly influenced by their capacity to write (Thomas, 2020), effective writing is highly complex and multifaceted (Beard et al. 2009).

Writing facilitates comprehension – writing about content enhances learning across subjects and grades. Writing well requires deliberate choices at the word, sentence, paragraph and whole-text levels to meet the needs of the intended audience and the purposes of many distinct text types (Christie & Derewianka 2008). And yet evidence from national testing suggests a large proportion of Australian school students struggle to write basic texts (Thomas, 2020). As student writing proficiency is strongly correlated to the writing instructional routines used by classroom teachers (Darling-Hammond 2008), this was the targeted focus for this project.

Writing to learn instruction needs to be frequent and routine (Graham et al 2020 as per AERO, 2022 p6) and yet in most classrooms is inadequate (Graham 2019, as per AERO 2022, p11). While many teachers use a range of techniques to teach writing, there is variation in both the practices used, and the frequency of application. Teacher education programs have been criticised for their failure to prepare pre-service teachers adequately in the writing domain and to ensure they have confidence when it comes to teaching writing methods (Myers et al 2016, as per AERO, 2022, p 11). Even when practices are evidence-based they are often not implemented with the frequency required to make them effective (Brindle et al. 2016; Graham 2019). In the ‘Australian Writing Survey’ well over 50% of secondary teachers outside of English reported they spent either no time at all or one hour only on explicitly teaching writing in their classrooms (Wyatt-Smith et al., 2018, as per AERO, 2022, p 16).

The AERO literature review, ‘*Writing and writing instruction: An overview of the literature*’ (Feb 2022), recognises the importance of writing regularly. The review recommends:

- that students increase the amount of time spent writing (composing) and receiving writing instruction (at least one hour each day); and
- effective instructional techniques are used consistently and frequently, across the curriculum.

The elements of explicit instruction, which are fundamental to any instruction, are also often missing from the teaching of writing (Graham, 2019). Sentence-level instruction, particularly sentence combining, is effective and recommended not only in the primary years, but also in the secondary years (Graham & Perin, 2007). Unless we provide this type of instruction across grades, to support the development of increasingly complex and sophisticated sentences, it is likely problems will continue to occur in students’ writing (AERO, 2022, p13).

Effective writing instruction involves a variety of approaches, including: (1) taking a process writing approach, (2) increasing opportunities for writing, (3) employing a variety of writing tasks, (4) increasing student motivation, (5) varying teaching methods, (6) modelling writing for learners, (7) promoting student self-regulation, (8) establishing positive writing environments,

(9) having high expectations of learners and (10) differentiating writing instruction and assessment (Graham & Perin, 2007, as cited in Thomas, 2020).

The Writing Project looked to determine which combination of these, and other, teaching routines, enhance student learning and outcomes whilst also building the instructional capacity and confidence of classroom teachers. It is important to understand and build on the skills which primary school students bring with them to secondary school. Whilst primary school writing instruction is ideally (but not always) embedded in cross-curriculum learning, secondary teaching focus is on learning content, with curricula, assessments and teaching practices assuming that specific curriculum literacy capabilities already exist among the learners (Freebody, 2007). As the 'knowledge students engage with becomes more formalised and complex, so too do the patterns of language that construct knowledge' (Fang & Schleppgrell, 2008). In other words, teachers need to adopt explicit literacy instructional routines in each discipline (not just English) to instruct students about language.

Research has also highlighted the importance of dialogic classroom talk (using the metalanguage of literacy) to develop students' metalinguistic skills. It enables students to shape meaning in texts and understand decision making choices when writing available to them but the teachers' management of talk during the teaching of writing is crucial, as it fosters the development of student learning about the writing process (Myhill et al., 2016). When language learning takes place within the learning of content which is relevant to the student, learning is enhanced (Schleppgrell, 2013).

Consequently, each subject teacher needs to show students explicitly how they can 'write like an expert' in that subject. A consistent approach to writing where a shared vocabulary about language is adopted is key to communicating ideas with precision and accuracy. It enables teachers to build students' expert use of vocabulary by explicitly teaching them the key noun phrases and verbs that are necessary for explanation and analysis in a particular topic. To be able to do this, teachers themselves need to be comfortable with this vocabulary.

International data suggests that instruction in planning, drafting, evaluating and revising writing is another area where practices in the classroom often vary and where often, not enough attention is provided. Explicit and systematic strategy instruction in planning, drafting, evaluating and revising, with modelling, guided practice and feedback, has a significant positive effect on student writing quality in primary (Graham et al., 2012a; Kim et al. 2021) and secondary (Graham & Perin, 2007a), as cited in AERO 2022, p 14. In particular, systematic formative assessment practices that include feedback to students as a daily practice have a significant impact on student writing quality but are infrequently used (AERO, 2022, pp17-18).

In summary, time and attention must be dedicated to developing ability and self-efficacy, teaching the value and numerous purposes of writing whilst creating a supportive writing environment where students compose routinely. There are several concrete actions which can be taken to ensure adequate attention is given to writing. These include dedicating sufficient time to daily writing and writing instruction, ensuring the classroom environment is positive and supportive, providing adequate resources, like text models, planning templates, genre structures and digital tools, and allowing students to collaborate for planning, writing and feedback (AERO, 2022, pp19-20).

There are 3 central issues in writing instruction affecting student abilities and outcomes. Insufficient time is dedicated to writing instruction, students do not write frequently enough and the absence of a shared, coherent body of linguistic and pedagogical knowledge among teachers means that effective teaching techniques are applied inconsistently and infrequently (AERO 2022, p21). Wenona's Writing Project sought to investigate these issues by using research to develop an effective model of writing instructional strategies which can be used across various disciplines in Stages 3, 4 and 5 so that writing is used to support and enhance learning. It also considered the use of explicit feedback to move students forward whilst creating motivating and supportive writing environments where writing is valued, routine and collaborative (AERO, 2022, p21).

Writing instruction models

Wenona used the *Teaching Language in Context* learning cycle as a model to phase comprehensive understanding in making meaning during literacy processes. The framework was based on the research by Derewianka and Jones (2023) and focuses on reading, talking and writing as interdependent foundational literacy practices. This is diagrammatically represented as:

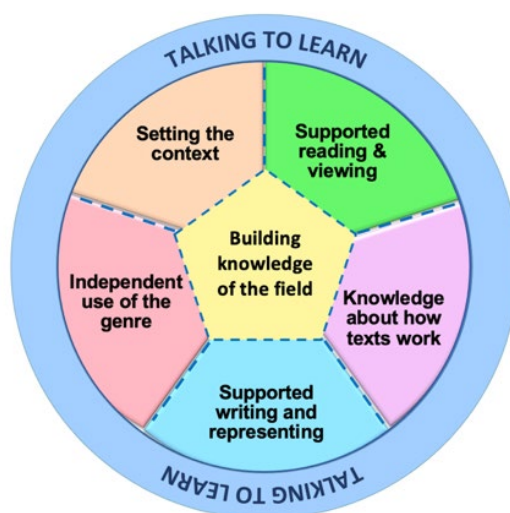


Figure 1 Talking to Learn Framework (Derewianka & Jones, page 56)

This model of literacy interventions was chosen because it:

- is concerned with deep learning of content (knowledge of the field).
- recognises that curriculum knowledge is learnt primarily through reading, writing and class discussions – language and content are inseparable.
- identifies the language and literacy demands of curriculum tasks.
- explicitly teaches students the literacy and language skills needed to achieve the task outcomes.
- supports students to achieve goals which they could not achieve by themselves.
- does not make the assumption that students know how to read the complex texts of late primary and secondary education, but explicitly teaches them how to interpret and compose such texts.
- uses the 'gradual release of responsibility' approach.

This model of literacy practice informs teaching practice as:

- the stages of the cycle are integrated at appropriate points into current curriculum units, providing multiple ways of accessing content – they are not sequential.
- it locates the explicit teaching of language and literacy within the teaching of curriculum content – literacy skills in a meaningful context.
- it allows teachers to incorporate familiar literacy activities into each stage, depending on their students, the task, and the learning goal/s.
- it brings together oral interaction, reading, writing and language in a coherent whole.
- enables the use of rich tasks that involve analysis, synthesis, evaluation, decision making and creativity.

The purpose of using this model to inform the literacy interventions trialled in this project was to:

- empower both teaching staff and students by providing an understanding of how language can be used to deepen learning and shape meaning making.
- provide consistent practical teaching and learning strategies relating to writing.
- establish a shared language for talking about writing.
- improve students' clarity around the next steps for their learning progression in writing for meaning.
- increase teacher capacity in writing instruction so that literacy teaching can be authentically contextualised and explicitly taught within their disciplines.
- enhance student confidence and achievement when writing across designated non-English curriculum areas.
- build a school culture of writing regularly so that students are engaged with substantial content and authentic texts across all areas of the curriculum.

Professional Learning – Best Practice Principles

Creating a professional learning (PL) community to engage teachers in the learning process is key to enhancing the effectiveness of the delivery of PL. This is because it enables teachers to learn authentically by collaborating with each other, and reflecting on their own practice, setting goals and identifying how to refine and improve their teaching practice, both collectively and individually. Providing opportunities for teachers to talk with each other about teaching is a significant influence on their impact because they are 'evaluating their beliefs and evidence of impact, seeking critique and alternative explanations of their impact' (Hattie, 2023, p241).

Hattie's (2023) more recent research on visible learning, synthesising over 2100 meta-analyses relating to achievement, reviewed the key findings of Timperley et al's (2007) meta-analysis on PL, which still remains the most comprehensive review of PL. With an overall effect of 0.66 as identified by Timperley et al (2007), Hattie (2023) affirmed the earlier research's finding that it is important when designing PL to include opportunities for teachers to participate in professional communities of practice and elaborated further, highlighting that the focus of these discussions needs to be on using evidence to determine the impact of PL on student learning.

Providing teachers with collaborative opportunities to learn from each other is necessary but not sufficient (Hattie, 2023; Timperley et al., 2007). Teachers need to be provided with time for extended engagement in developing their knowledge and understanding (Timperley et al., 2007). Although extended opportunities to learn may not necessarily be more effective than one-off PL (Timperley et al., 2007), various studies have shown that active and collaborative professional learning by teachers which aligns with both the school and teacher priorities, sustained over time, has consistently been linked to changes in teachers' knowledge and practice (Gore & Rosser, 2022).



Figure 2 Academic Mentors Workshops with Faculties – Term 3 2023 and Term 2 2024

The core principles in this research guided the development and design of how Wenona delivered the PL associated with the literacy teaching interventions. This learning was sustained over the 2-year period of this project and varied in approach, including whole school presentations, individual and cross-faculty meetings, external academic mentor workshops and individual discussions. An important feature of the PL framework used was that it involved both external academic mentors as well as school-based curriculum experts leading collaborative learning conversations about the project's aims and interventions.

4. Purpose of the Study and Research Questions

The aim of the project was to investigate whether a targeted approach (namely the literacy Teaching and Learning Cycle [Derewianka & Jones, 2023]) to improving students' writing proficiency in designated cross-curricula areas in Stages 3, 4 and 5 at Wenona impact student confidence and achievement, and teacher instructional capacity.

Specifically, the research objectives were:

1. Increase self-efficacy/empower Years 5-10 students to feel confident when writing across designated curriculum areas.
2. Increase student writing achievement across key literacy indicators e.g. NAPLAN, Allwell, HSC Minimum Standards.
3. Build teacher instructional capacity in writing in their disciplines by developing a consistent approach to writing in certain non-English subjects.
4. Test and develop an effective best-practice model to share with other Association of Independent Schools, NSW (AISNSW) schools.

This was addressed through the following research questions:

1. How confident do students in Stages 3, 4 and 5 (Years 5-10) at Wenona feel about their academic writing capabilities?
2. Does a cross-curriculum writing intervention (namely the literacy Teaching and Learning Cycle) impact:
 - a. students' writing development with respect to subject-specific writing tasks as well as generic writing skills; and
 - b. teacher instructional capacity and confidence?

For the purposes of this report, the project analysis narrowed to focus on Research Question 2: how does a collaborative professional learning intervention focused on the literacy Teaching and Learning Cycle and a shared metalanguage impact on teachers' instructional capacity and confidence?

The hypothesis proposed at the project outset were:

1. that adopting the teaching learning cycle (as per Sydney School genre-based pedagogy) in selected Stage 3, 4 and 5 in difference curricula areas will improve both the confidence and academic outcomes of students; and
2. that increasing teacher understanding and skills in writing instruction will build teacher self-efficacy in writing enabling them to contextualise literacy teaching in their classrooms.

5. Methods and Data Collection Approaches

Research Approach

This has been a multi-stage, longitudinal study using a qualitative methodology. This approach was chosen as it could provide high-quality insights into behaviors and experiences associated with teaching and learning. The qualitative methods used included:

- Individual interviews
- Group interviews
- Examination of student work
- Examination of educational records
- Audio recordings with consent – teachers and students
- Overt observation of participants

Research Design

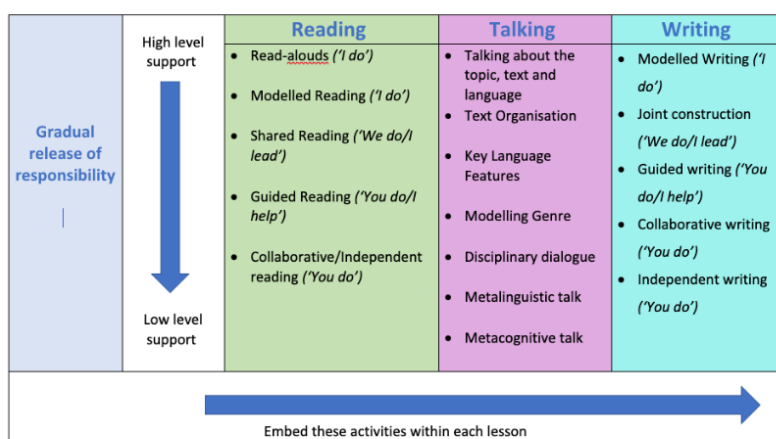
An action research approach was used for this study because it is a reflective and recursive process, enabling refinement throughout the project period. The aim was to increase the effectiveness of this action research through the persistent and deliberate observation and involvement of both teachers and students in the process.

Intervention Design

The initial design intention for the project was to create a literacy toolkit that was applicable across stages and faculties. Whilst this remains the final objective for the project, adjustments have been made for the different learning paths for primary and secondary staff members. These changes were made in collaboration with the academic mentors who identified the need for a differentiated approach due to the context of Wenona Junior, Middle and Upper Schools, and the foundational skill set of teachers from both spheres.

The Three Pillar Instructional Framework (as set out below and in Appendix 1) was developed to guide PL for Stage 4 and 5 which has occurred regularly throughout 2023 and 2024. The framework was based on the research by Jones and Derewianka and focuses on reading, talking and writing as interdependent foundational literacy practices.

3 Pillars Instructional Framework: Reading, Talking & Writing

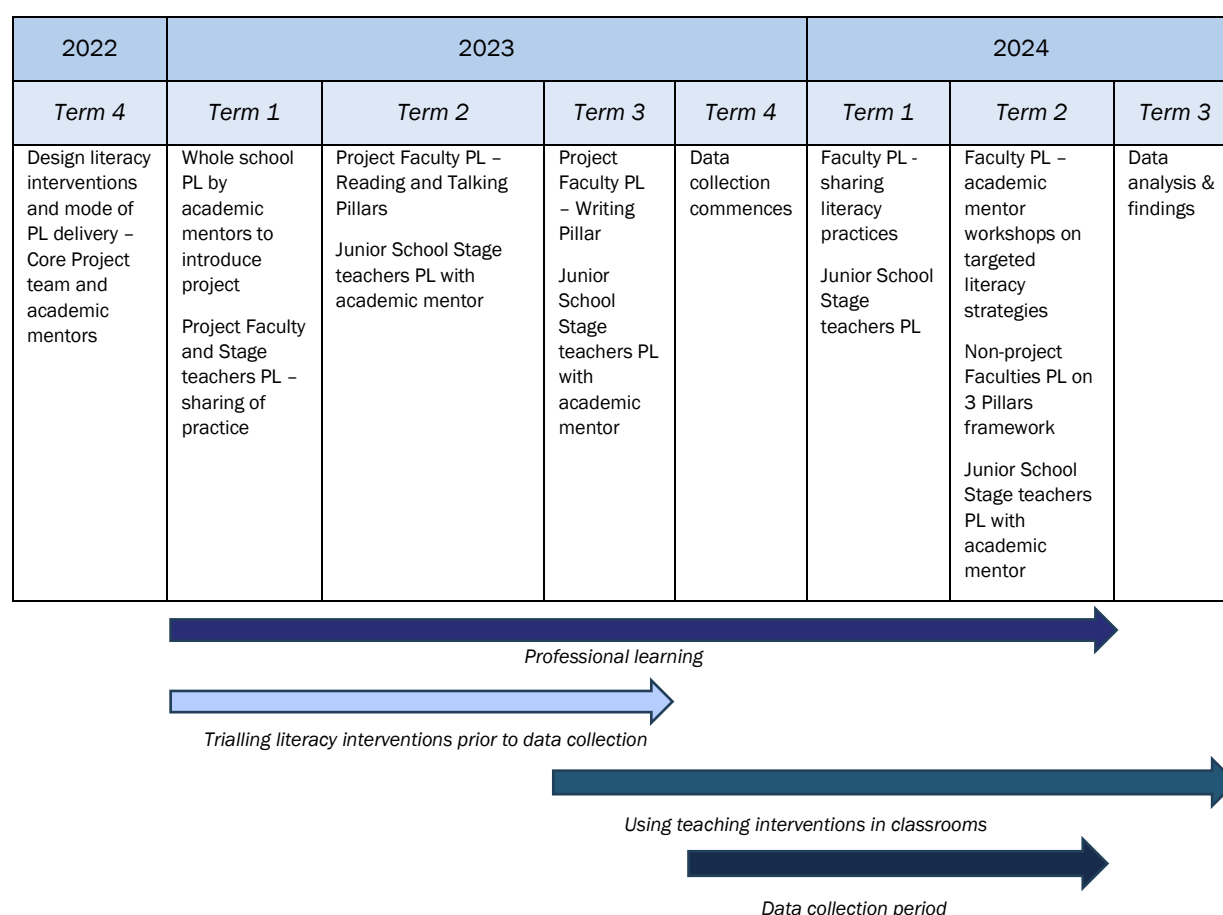


Wenona initially launched the Writing Project in January 2023 with a full K-12 staff development day facilitated by the academic mentors. This PL session focused on ‘*Literacy as a Tool for Thinking and Learning*’, providing a global overview of best literacy practices across all curriculum areas. Staff unpacked the concept of literacy, explored the role of reading, writing and oral interactions in learning across all disciplines and were introduced to the concept of a literacy continuum moving from highly constrained skills to highly unconstrained literacy skills. Staff were also introduced to the *Teaching Language in Context Learning Cycle* as a model to phase comprehensive understanding in making meaning during literacy processes.

Following this K-12 staff development day, within each of the 6 teaching terms throughout the project period, the project Faculties/Stages were provided with dedicated time and training to facilitate reflection and discussion on how to embed these literacy practices within existing programs and units of work. This included time working with the academic mentors to clarify instructional approaches which had been used and refining best practice in areas relevant to the teaching expertise within each team. Time was also used to share approaches and practices across curriculum areas. During this period, we also commenced parallel training for the teachers in secondary faculties not involved in the project around the literacy interventions.

Data collection commenced in Term 4 in 2023 and Semester 1 in 2024. The PL process was intentionally designed in this way to give teaching staff time to become familiar with the new literacy practices and to collaborate within their teams and draw on the expertise of the academic mentors.

Figure 3 Overview of Writing Project Methodology



Approach in Secondary School

Participating secondary staff undertook intensive PL throughout the year focused on building expertise relating to each pillar. This included unpacking corresponding literacy interventions to facilitate student confidence and success. Faculties have then integrated chosen interventions to adjust teacher and learning programs to trial within the classroom.

For example, in Senior School PL sessions focused on:

- Term 1, 2023, the overall rationale of the project and the proposed teaching framework
- Term 2, 2023, the teaching strategies within the Reading Pillar & Talking Pillar (see *Appendices 2 & 3*)
- Term 3, 2023, the teaching strategies within the Writing Pillar (see *Appendix 4*)
- Term 4, 2023 – consolidation of all strategies within the 3 Pillars Instructional Framework and
- Semester 1, 2024, each faculty had a workshop and time with one of the academic mentors so that curriculum specific literacy approaches could be refined.

Approach in Junior School

Wenona Junior School is part of the International Baccalaureate's Primary Years Programme and delivers a transdisciplinary curriculum. As the Stage 3 transdisciplinary units already heavily foreground literacy skill development, the decision was made to focus on implementing the Learning Cycle (rather than core components of it, as has occurred in Senior School).

Furthermore, Stage 3 has integrated a second tier of literacy interventions responsive to student needs to extend teachers' professional skill sets. The design of these interventions was informed by Teaching Language in Context and supported by mentor Pauline Jones.

In the Junior School, the PL focused on:

- Term 2, 2023 – *Teaching Language in Context* Learning Cycle: Building Knowledge of the Field, Setting the Context, Supported Reading and Viewing, Knowledge About How Texts Work, Supported Writing and Representing and Independent Use of Genre, with high impact teaching strategies mapped to relevant phases of the cycles.
Tier 2 Interventions
 - Year 5, Scientific Explanations guided by Junior School Head of Curriculum.
 - Year 6, Extended Responses guided by Junior School Head of Curriculum and PL by Professor James Tognolini.
- Term 3, 2023 – continued application and consolidation of Learning Cycle with high impact teaching strategies supported through weekly collaborative curriculum meetings and PL meetings.
Tier 2 Interventions
 - Year 5, Interpretive Responses in collaboration with Professor Pauline Jones.
 - Year 6, Creative Responses guided by Junior School Head of Curriculum.
- Term 4, 2023 – continued application and consolidation of Learning Cycle with high impact teaching strategies supported through weekly collaborative curriculum meetings and PL meetings.
Tier 2 Interventions
 - Year 5, Hortatory Expositions guided by Junior School Head of Curriculum.
- Semester 1, 2024, continued consolidation and refinement of Learning Cycle.
Tier 2 Interventions
 - Year 6, Character Analysis in collaboration with Professor Pauline Jones.

Participants

The participants in this project were:

- Dean of Research and Practice (Lead Researcher)
- Deputy Principal (Academics)
- Deputy Principal (Professional Practice & Culture)
- Core Project team (see below)
- Academic Mentors
- Research Assistant
- Selected Junior and Senior School classroom teachers
- Selected Year 5-10 students
- Parents

Students and Parents

At the outset, the intention was for participating students to comprise 54 selected students in Stages 3, 4 and 5 with primary teachers of Stage 3 and secondary teachers of History, Science, Social Science, and PDHPE in Stages 4 and 5 (Focus team). 18 students (10% to 20% of each cohort). In each of Years 5, 7 and 9, 18 students were identified (6 students within each of high, mid and low attainment levels as selected by teachers using a variety of external and internal assessment data) and tracked across the same 4 subjects (History, Science, Social Science, and PDHPE) in Term 4, 2023 and Semester 1, 2024. 18 students in each year (6 in each attainment level) allowed for attrition. Challenges with gaining parental consent and extended student absences meant that a total of 39 students were involved for data collection purposes.

It is important to note, from an ethics perspective that participating students were not disadvantaged by the project activities as the proposed intervention was a part of regular class activities. All students in the curriculum areas involved in the project were given the benefit of the project teaching interventions. For this reason, the total number of students receiving the benefit of the teaching interventions being trialed in this project was in fact far higher than the number indicated above.

Additionally, each teaching team within the Faculties/Stages involved in the project broadened their application of the Three Pillar Instructional Framework (Stages 4 and 5) and the Learning Cycle (Stage 3) beyond only those classes with students being tracked for the purposes of data collection. For example, the PDHPE Faculty re-worked all Stage 3 and 4 programs, for Years 7-10, to improve the contextualised teaching of literacy within their subject specific content.

Teaching Staff

Teacher engagement and involvement in the program was critical. This was facilitated through involving a wide range of teaching professionals across targeted curriculum areas and stages. Significant time was allocated throughout the project to empower research team members to work closely with set curriculum areas to further achieve the project aims.

Wenona has an extensive Professional Practice Programme involving goal setting, professional learning, feedback and evaluation for all staff. This reflects the school's commitment to ongoing continual improvement, in both pedagogical knowledge and teaching practices, to enhance each student's experience and learning. Throughout the life of the project, time was allocated to

provide targeted professional learning which will support the purpose and aims of this project. e.g. staff development sessions and faculty meetings.

Participating teachers were identified and invited to participate by the school-based research team. Teachers involved for data collection purposes were 2 primary teachers of Year 5 and 1 classroom teacher from each of the Years 7 & 9 discipline specialties of History, Science, Social Science and PDHPE. All teachers were selected for their understandings of progression in their subjects and willingness to be involved in the implementation and evaluation of the writing intervention.

An unexpected complication for the project was that the data collection period straddled the teaching academic year e.g. Semester 2, 2023 to Semester 1, 2024. This meant that although the students involved in the project for data collection purposes did not change, some class teachers involved in the project did. As the project evolved and the roll-out of the teaching frameworks expanded throughout the project period, a greater number of teachers became involved in trialling the literacy interventions.

The project was led by a School Based Research Team within Wenona:

- Natasha Isbel, Dean of Research & Ethics (Lead Researcher)
- Trish Davis, Deputy Principal (Academics)
- Nicole Timbrell, Deputy Principal (Professional Practice & Culture)
- Amy Webb, Acting Deputy Principal (Students) & Dean of Schools
- Charlie Plummer, Head of Early Learning

This team worked collaboratively with the various teaching staff and faculties involved with the project, determining the pedagogical approaches to be used, designing the professional learning framework for the project and facilitating its practical implementation. This team reported directly, and regularly, to Wenona's Principal, Dr Briony Scott.

Academics Mentors

The School Based Research Team were very grateful for the opportunity of working closely with our academic mentors in all aspects of the project over the 2-year period. Professor Pauline Jones and Emeritus Professor Beverley Derewianka, from the University of Wollongong, are pre-eminent practitioners within the field of literacy education, both nationally and globally.

Recruitment

The process for recruiting participants was as follows:

- Students – as outlined above in the *Participants* section.
- Teachers – voluntary, based on interest in literacy and teaching the relevant year groups being tracked for data collection purposes.
- School-Based Research Team members – included teachers with expertise in leadership within the Junior, Middle and Upper Schools (of the year groups involved), data analysis and management of staff. Although discussions involved staff from the English Faculty, a deliberate decision was made not to include a teacher from this team in the School Based Research Team. This decision was made because the English faculty is often erroneously given responsibility for literacy for all subjects, ignoring the subject-specific nature of literacy in the secondary school. The English faculty supported this position.

For each student and teacher involved in the project, participation statements were provided and informed consents obtained as per the University of Wollongong Ethics Approval. This process occurred during Term 4, 2023.

Ethical Considerations

The research protocols for this study were reviewed and approved by the Social Sciences Human Research Ethics Committee at the University of Wollongong. All care was taken to ensure that teachers and students' participation was voluntary and that participants understood their right to withdraw from the study at any time. A variety of ethics approved documentation was used in the research project, including the Student Participation Information Statements (see *Appendix 5*) and teacher interview questions (see *Appendix 6*).

Teachers and students at Wenona (as in many other contemporary school communities) come from cultural and linguistically diverse backgrounds. The research team worked to ensure that respect for the participants was not compromised by the research intent or implementation or results. Student and parent consent was sought subject to the ethical guidelines of University of Wollongong.

All research was also conducted in accordance with the AISNSW Ethical Guidelines, where the privacy and confidentiality of all participants was respected and protected. All teachers, students and their parents were provided with an informed consent form outlining the purpose of the study. Participants selected for interview were given additional information about the purpose of the study and notified of their right to withdraw.

PL meetings were arranged for the School Based Research Team to talk to teachers of targeted disciplines about the project. The information sheet was distributed at the initial meetings. Teachers were informed of the nature of their involvement should they be interested in participating in the project. Participant Information Sheets and Consent Forms were provided for participating teachers and consent from participating teachers was sought prior to their involvement in the project.

For student participants, interviews with focus students took about 30 minutes per interview. The collection of student data aligned with the school's regular action learning processes where teachers collect data from their classes to improve teaching practice. Students were interviewed either by UOW academic mentors or members of the School Based Research Team who do not have responsibility for marking students' work e.g. Research Assistant interviewed secondary students. Wherever possible, interviews were scheduled during lunch breaks to minimise disruptions to students' class attendance. Student writing samples were collected as part of their usual class and assessment tasks. The writing intervention used formed part of the usual class programs, so no student was disadvantaged by participating in writing activities. Interviews with students in the final, evaluation phase of the project were undertaken in pairs so that students can jointly reflect upon their experiences of the intervention and its impact on their writing in different subject areas. The total interview time for each student during the project was 60 mins.

For teacher participants, interviews with teacher participants took about 30 minutes per interview. Recognition was made that involvement in the project makes additional demands on individual and institutional resources. However, focus teachers were provided with support in the form of some time to participate in project related activities such as professional learning,

program planning and reflection as well as reviewing data and data summaries. The total interview time for each teacher during the project was 60 mins.

Research Procedure

A significant volume of data has been collected throughout the project period and will continue to be analysed well into 2025. For the purposes of this report, the focus of the analysis has narrowed to consider only the staff baseline and final interviews to determine the impact of the professional learning on their capacity and confidence to contextualise writing instruction.

The table below highlights the scope and scale of the action research undertaken.

	Stage 3	Stage 4	Stage 5	Totals
Students				
Total Students Selected to Participate	17	18	17	52
Total Students Consenting to Participate	15	14	10	39
Number students interviewed (baseline and final)	15	18	7	40
Total students in classes/cohorts the interventions were trialled in	95	175	170	440
Total work samples collected throughout the project	33	58	30	116
Staff				
Total Staff Participants – in professional learning	11	119		130
Total Staff trialling interventions and collecting data	11	Approx. 24	Approx. 21	Approx. 49
Number of teachers interviewed (baseline and/or final)	2 Baseline 3 Final	4 Baseline 8 Final		Approx. 17
Total number of professional learning hours – whole school, Faculty & Stage workshops Whole School: 5 hours Stage 4/5: 10 hours Stage 3: 16 hours				

The project unfolded around three stages as follows (some of these occurred concurrently).

Stage 1: Design cross-discipline instructional writing routines and PL for teachers (Oct 2022 - June 2023)

The purpose of this stage was to establish the project, to build shared understandings about writing and to identify writing strategies and subject-specific literacy practices.

Activities included:

- an orientation to the project and to specific-specific literacy for whole staff.
- securing ethics approval.
- extended professional learning for focus team with respect to the Learning Cycle and knowledge about language.
- review of existing programs and teaching practice by way of discussion in order to gain a deep understanding of the current context for writing instruction.

- identification of cross-curricula writing strategies alongside subject-specific literacy practices and consistent metalanguage for writing.
- in-depth planning with designated faculties (upper primary classes and secondary History, Science, Social Science (Geography and Commerce) and PDHPE).
- identification of focus students.

Stage 2: Implementation of writing interventions (June 2023 - June 2024)

The purpose of this stage was to trial the targeted approach in designated stages and learning areas.

This involved:

- piloting interventions in Stage 3, and Stage 4 and 5 History, Science, Social Science and PDHPE faculties.
- school-based researchers and academics working alongside focus teachers and students to support embedding interventions into programmed teaching practices.
- conducting regular and differentiated professional learning to classroom teachers through school's existing professional improvement framework, the Learning Improvement Cycle.
- monitoring focus students' writing development through work sample collection (multiple drafts of writing tasks) and interviews with students and teachers.

Stage 3: Evaluation and dissemination (June 2024 - ongoing)

The purpose of this stage was to assess impact of the writing intervention on students' achievement and confidence of students and teachers, facilitate dissemination of project findings and resources as well as develop whole school future-oriented literacy policy. This has or will involve the following activities:

- students and teachers were interviewed to gather their accounts of the intervention with respect to confidence and achievement.
- student participants' writing progress will be evaluated using data collected in Stage 2 of the progress using linguistically oriented indicators (to occur in 2025).
- review available quantitative performance data in writing (internal formative assessment data, Allwell, NAPLAN, HSC Minimum Standards etc) to impact of writing interventions (to occur in 2025).
- create a writing continuum/rubric so that students have clarity around next steps in learning progression (to occur in 2025).
- finalise exemplar units of work developed during Stage 2, gather resources and upload to school-based repository.

Data Analysis

Metler (2020) emphasises the significance of using analytical techniques which provide deeper insights into the research question and enable trends to be identified and findings made. Inductive analysis was used to analyse the qualitative data and identify key patterns and themes to avoid it becoming overwhelming (Johnson, 2008; Parson & Brown, 2002 as cited in Mertler, 2020). This three-step process of organisation, description and interpretation for conducting a

qualitative thematic analysis enabled a better understanding of the results of the action and the individual experiences of the teachers throughout the project.

After collecting the data, all recorded baseline and final interviews with students and teachers were transcribed then analysed to track growth and change in teacher self-efficacy in using the teaching interventions. Some work samples and assessment results were also evaluated to identify key themes and trends, and any similarities and anomalies. These data gathered were then cross-checked with teacher field notes and observations, as well as with those of our academic mentors.

As outlined above, the data methods, theoretical frameworks and considerations used throughout the course of the project were regularly reviewed and analysed to ensure that the project key deliverables and milestones were met and that the project remained within the set parameters. It is acknowledged that the research team drew on external input, from the AISNSW The Evidence Institute and the project's academic mentors, to ensure that data validity and reliability was maintained throughout the course of the research project.

6. Results and Findings

For the purposes of this report, the analysis of data collected for this project narrowed to focus on Research Question 2: how does a collaborative professional learning intervention focused on the literacy Teaching and Learning Cycle and a shared metalanguage impact on teachers' instructional capacity and confidence? The hypothesis proposed at the project outset in relation to this question was that increasing teacher understanding and skills in writing instruction will build teacher self-efficacy in writing enabling them to contextualise literacy teaching in their classrooms.

The following 4 themes emerged from the analysis of data relating to Research Question 2:

1. There was a positive impact of developing and using the Three Pillars Framework in Senior School/Learning Cycle in the Junior School.
2. It is important to use a shared metalanguage for discussion about writing, both between teachers and between teachers and students.
3. There was a positive change in the school culture about the intentional teaching of writing within curriculum context.
4. The multi-faceted PL framework used was effective, involving a layered approach including whole school PL, the involvement of external linguistic experts, Faculty/Stage meeting time, team discussions and in-school champions leading change.

The thematic analysis of data collected in relation to Research Question 2 also highlighted the following limitations:

1. Time and resourcing for large scale action research projects within schools can be a challenge.
2. The literacy interventions used may not work for all students.
3. Staff attrition and internal movement can make the sustainability of the project more difficult.
4. Not all staff saw the merit in the project's purpose.

7. Discussion

Pseudonyms have been used in this section.

Action research in schools requires agility and flexibility. Throughout the project design and implementation process, issues of resourcing, logistics, managing competing demands on teachers' time and staff changes needed to be managed. To date, these challenges have been successfully navigated and have been used by the School Based Research Team as an opportunity to reflect and reassess project priorities. Pleasingly, teaching staff have engaged strongly with the aim of creating a shared pedagogical understanding and knowledge of literacy strategies to build collective efficacy in the teaching of writing across faculties and learning stages.

Key Findings

The data analysis process identified 4 key themes.

1. Impact of 3 Pillars Framework/Learning Cycle

All teachers interviewed commented on the positive impact of developing and using the Three Pillars Framework in the Senior School and Learning Cycle within the Junior School. They found the evidence-based literacy strategies presented within the structure of the Framework/Cycle a useful way to think about supporting student learning, strengthening their understanding of the rigour of instructional routines needed to improve student engagement with written text. It also enhanced the intentionality of teachers' approach to contextualising the teaching of literacy within the teaching of content knowledge.

Learning Cycle in the Junior School

In her final teacher interview, Clare reflected from her perspective as curriculum coordinator on the impact of the project on classroom teachers. She noted that teachers had developed a far greater depth of understanding of the different components of writing, with it having been useful to map the Learning Cycle to the inquiry cycle within the International Baccalaureate. For classroom teachers using the Learning Cycle, Clare stated that:

“as a model, it's successful ... [there is] rigour, expectations, the ability to pitch high. It's introduced more intentionality into their teaching of English delving deeper into the different facets at a text level, sentence level, word level that are required”.

Yvonne and Shaun were the Year 5 and 6 classroom teachers involved in the project. Yvonne recognised the importance of choosing quality texts to anchor the unit of work. Shaun concurred, noting that *“the rigour of English programs has really improved... [for] students, through our teaching and through modelling, they gained a clear understanding of what is expected in summative assessments”*.

He found that the regular use of scaffolds with the students was effective as:

“when you challenge children, they rise to the task... for the children to collaborate and to challenge one another for certain tasks, that was really good... I like that shift because I think it gives more agency to the children”.

The impact of the Learning Cycle and the integration of the literacy skills within the context of learning was clear to Shaun as he noted that *“the build-up of the steps of the techniques that students use and the skills that they develop, it has just been nothing short of phenomenal”*.

Both Shaun and Yvonne observed that the cycle had introduced more intentionality into teaching of writing. Yvonne reflected that:

“what's improved [is] the slow release of learning... sometimes we used to jump straight to independent writing as opposed to modelling and jointly constructing it, so I think that's been an improvement for myself that I've noticed. That's helped with the development of the students work and the success of that their final pieces, because they've really able to have had that practice and being able to see those modelled examples and ones we've done together, especially for those students who aren't as strong of writers to, when we do a joint writing task, have the ideas of some of the more extended students to then help influence their own writing.”

Yvonne also agreed that the Learning Cycle was a useful way for thinking about supporting your students' learning and writing. She commented on the cycle being more explicit and *“a really structured and clear way for the students to be able to really understand the teaching and learning that is our goal”*. With the Learning Cycle providing many opportunities for students to practise engaging with language throughout the unit of work, both jointly and in pairs, using modelling, it *“enabled the girls to really understand the structure [required] and they were using really great vocabulary, figurative language and quotations.”*

In reference to the students' engagement with these literacy strategies and the unit of work on the Tim Winton book *“Bluebook”*, Yvonne found:

“It was just fantastic to have that kind of cyclical nature where we started with that pre assessment of their understanding of an interpretive response. [The benefit of] having a strong English unit alongside the interdisciplinary one is that you can come back to the English concepts and content in the context of different texts. It makes sense to [students] because [they are] seeing those connections... We then looked at Setting the Context and getting them to understand that context, giving them a model example and going through that really thoroughly and then linking back to that throughout the unit. It was really helpful so that when they got to [do] ... a joint construction and later on when they were able to get to that independent use of genre... they really had that prior knowledge and background understanding. They had practised it throughout so that they felt more confident, and we really saw such a difference in what they were producing from that pre assessment till the end.”

Interestingly, Yvonne also reflected on the ability to transfer the literacy strategies within the Learning Cycle within any stage of teaching and now appreciates the benefits for students of *“the slow build up”* to independent writing, gradually releasing responsibility for writing to the students. The cycle *“helps to organise the learning experiences in a sequential and impactful way”*.

For example, with another unit of work focused on Lois Lowry's book *“The Giver”*, Yvonne reflected on importance for the students of thinking about the setting of the novel being dystopian:

“Going into the supported reading and viewing, and leading into the guided writing and then into the individual writing, it meant that the girls had a clear understanding of how to build their knowledge and skills throughout the unit... I think having that was an effective way of teaching and for the girls to actually to gain that deeper level of understanding”.

Also, of interest was the impact of intentionally increasing the use of class discussions about language as a result of the cycle being used to guide programming. Yvonne noted that there were *“lots of class discussions about things as we are reading and then [students] being able to use those discussions to help formulate [their] writing.”* This also helped to contextualise the teaching of the basics of grammar and punctuation *“it's not so standalone when we do a spelling or grammar lesson... it becomes more relevant and meaningful for the students”*.

Three Pillars Framework in the Senior School

The introduction of the Three Pillars Framework into the Senior School was an intentional cross-curriculum approach to the contextualisation of the teaching of writing within the all-cohort subjects of History, Geography, PDHPE and Science. Overall, the classroom teachers involved in trialling these literacy strategies in their teaching practice found the framework helpful to support student learning.

Over the course of the action research project, the data shows that teachers have become more intentional in their instructional routines with it being viewed as an *“incredibly accessible framework”*. This was evident in the reflections of Tammy, a maths teacher not involved in the data collection aspect of the project but in the whole-school professional learning sessions. She thought *“it was a great structure for someone who's not involved in a literacy-based subject. It was clear, it gave direction, and it was easy to understand and to unpack. I think the framework meant that teachers weren't left wondering”*.

Stuart, a PDHPE teacher, has found that using the Framework has reinvigorated his teaching, making it a lot more enjoyable because

“it's given me so many more resources to explicitly teach the actual skills of reading and writing... I'm not just getting students to read out loud every time, or just doing class discussion with people putting hands up. I think I've learned a lot more, skills, opportunities, ways of just engaging learners in their writing... The Pillars are just good teaching practice and establishing those foundations that I feel students have lost or become less focussed on, it was really good to reaffirm my own teaching. It has provided me with some different tools e.g. a whole new array of writing techniques which are synced and have been more effective so far.”

When discussing which teaching practices had been the most useful, Stuart favoured using joint constructions, close reading annotation keys and discussions about text. Using annotation keys when reading articles together with students gave him the confidence to tell the students it was acceptable not to understand a word and teach them ways to work out the meaning of those words. Stuart also enjoyed using the strategies within the Talking Pillar because although a lot of the PDHPE content is discussion based, he would never have categorised it as that before nor seen the importance of talking things through and getting students to be able to articulate their learning using the spoken form first before writing. Stuart had also been able to observe the benefit and response of students using the joint construction method of writing.

Similarly, Scarlett, a History teacher, noted that she enjoyed being more mindful of the way that she approached literacy in her classroom, making it more explicit and providing names and reasons for *“why we do what we do”*. For example, she worked with students by doing *“joint constructions, where we craft a paragraph topic sentence together and maybe the subsequent sentence within the paragraph, and then I'll let them do their thing”*. Scarlett used a variety of literacy interventions: exemplars, writing scaffolds to assist with extended response writing, annotating readings as a class group to generate discussions around the text, all of which *“helps*

students to feel more confident in approaching a summative assessment task because they have an agreed understanding of what the expectations are and what we're looking for when we're marking the task".

Scarlett also found that the students enjoyed using the various strategies within the Three Pillar Framework, intentionally discussing literacy with them. It increased their *"buy-in and agency in the writing process because they have been involved in constructing something"*.

For beginning Geography teacher Eva, targeting literacy using the Three Pillar Framework facilitated students engaging more closely with text and *"make deeper connections between what they were learning now and what they've previously learned"*. Reading news articles together with her class enabled her to teach students how to properly engage with the text and read for meaning, learning new words and phrases. This led to meaningful discussions. Eva found *"it is quite useful to have the ability to select different strategies within each pillar and adapt it to whatever you were teaching in class at the time"*.

Similarly, Yvonne noted that *"I remember hearing about these things at uni but had not tried them"* which shows the value in providing opportunities for collaborative discussions focused on best practices in teaching and the space to trial new approaches. Scarlett also commented on the value in the PL program of the opportunities for cross-faculty discussions, using the example of now understanding how students use evidence to support their arguments in English which is different to that used in History.

In the Science curriculum area, Kate reflected on the benefit of using the Three Pillar Framework making her much more conscious of language and what you teach. This is because it *"does make you stop, think and break down what you do. For example, getting students as they are reading to highlight unfamiliar words, and then can you unpack from the sentence structure in the paragraph – that then generates discussion around text."*

Importance of Evidence Based Decisions

The data analysis highlighted the importance of drawing on the expertise and widely published research of our academic mentors to develop the Three Pillars Framework/Learning Cycle used in the action research. Yvonne appreciated the research and evidence behind the Learning Cycle, with the clear scaffolding and structure helping to organise the learning and the teaching.

The benefit of using an evidence informed approach and guidance of an external mentor to improving the teaching and learning of classroom practitioners was also highlighted in Clare's comment: this enabled staff to be *"open to the feedback from someone with the expertise like Pauline, who was able to very expertly mould and correct different interpretations and manage different levels of experience to bring the teams together"*.

2. The Value of a Shared Metalanguage

The data analysis confirmed the hypothesis that it is important to use a shared metalanguage for discussion about writing, both between teachers and between teachers and students. Natalie, a Secondary curriculum specialist, enjoyed hearing the increased usage of the metalanguage within the Three Pillar Framework - joint construction, shared reading, guided reading, annotations and paraphrasing.

Kate noted that the value in using a shared metalanguage is because it provided greater transferability for students of skills and understanding between subjects e.g. Science and English. Similarly, Lila, a Science teacher, and Penny a Geography teacher, both found it affirming to now have the name for the literacy strategies they have been implementing for some time and

be reminded to use some of the literacy strategies which they had fallen out of the habit of using. Julia, another Geography teacher, noted that having this language enabled her to have improved conversations about literacy strategies with students. Stuart benefited from using the metalanguage to ensure that all teachers within his faculty are *“on the same page about what the strategy is going to look like in in your context”* whilst noting that for students, *“it is giving them the language to talk about the steps involved in writing text and to verbalise their thoughts and I think they're making connections with what they're doing in the other subjects as well”*.

3. Changing School Culture

Throughout the course of the action research period, there was a positive change in the school culture about the intentional teaching of writing within the curriculum context. This action research project was unique in that the initiative came from the school, wanting to use an evidence informed approach to improving how we teach writing.

Participation in this research has enabled Wenona to create a consistent framework of instructional strategies and developing a shared metalanguage for discussing these – between teachers and between teachers and students. This was important as it has helped to build transferable skills for students across curriculum areas and year groups. Nina, responsible for Professional Practice K-12, noted that the strategy for the project was very clear from the start – the talking, reading and writing interventions were to be used to improve outcomes across every subject, not just English. This enabled these strategies to be recognisable in different subjects.

Both Senior and Junior School classroom teachers now have an increased awareness of, and confidence to share the responsibility of teaching students to write well, as well as knowledge of a shared framework and metalanguage for collaborative conversations about this. They have also seen the power of conducting action research in their own classrooms – collecting data about their teaching, reflecting on this and refining their practice to improve student learning outcomes.

For example, Kate noted that for her students, this project has *“normalised the collaboration part of writing, especially across all the subjects, it has just become a little bit more core business”*. Stuart likes to keep the Framework document, listing the various literacy strategies, close to hand as *“I just always bring that document out and I just go through it to trial something ... sometimes it does not work as well”*.

In reflecting on the impact of the action research on one of the Junior School teachers involved in the project, Clare commented that *“for them, it's lit a fire for a different way to approach teaching students how to write and teaching students how to learn through writing... There has been a lot more rigour in the teaching approach”*. Yvonne agrees, acknowledging that she *“will continuously keep practising programming in this way and intentionally build in these teaching strategies”*. She has been able to transfer her professional learning and experience gained when teaching Year 5 to her leadership of Year 6. In this way, the impact of the action research project is evident on the teaching and learning culture of the school.

Natalie noted that whilst these changes have been pleasing, it is important for the project's work to be sustainable: *“the focus will continue to be on embedding these literacy approaches into our teaching and learning programs and we have already started working with those faculties not initially involved e.g. Maths – where reading is a key skill needed for students to be able to demonstrate what they know”*.

This action research project has also provided a platform to demonstrate and progress the school wide understanding of the importance of an evidence informed approach to improving teaching practice.

4. Professional Learning Framework

The way in which professional learning was delivered throughout the research project has been important. This was sustained throughout the two-year project period, aiming to develop the confidence and effectiveness of teachers in contextualising writing instruction within their teaching of curriculum knowledge. As with the design of the Three Pillars Framework and Learning Cycle, an evidence informed approach was also used to plan a coherent methodology to the delivery of teachers' professional learning (PL).

The multi-faceted PL framework used was effective, involving a layered approach including whole school PL, the involvement of external linguistic experts, Faculty/Stage meeting time, team discussions and in-school champions leading change. Time was provided for faculties and stage-based teams to meet and discuss these new approaches to teaching writing within the teaching of content knowledge. This model allowed teachers time to collaborate, share and reflect on and refine how best to embed these instructional routines into the teaching of content knowledge.

Nina reflected on the benefit of PL methodology adopted: *"it's been a good mix of getting people together in a room for the project launch that we did with January 2023. I think the days where the faculties [worked with] the academic mentors have been particularly well received and I certainly enjoyed the opportunity to work with the science team when I was supporting the team delivering some of that PL."*

In the Junior School, weekly one hour timetabled curriculum meetings with the teaching team of every year group enabled an effective PL model to be used. Clare noted that this *"involved the use of small meetings, going away, doing some work, coming back, doing small meetings and then communicating with the academic mentor during the construction of the unit and at the end of the unit to maintain the importance of the task"*. This finding is consistent with Hattie (2023) and Timperley et al.'s (2007) research in this area which emphasises the importance of collaboration.

In secondary, Lila saw the value of this PL time, enjoying the opportunity to talk and collaborate with other teachers, both within her faculty and others. Scarlett also noted that she enjoyed the wider school community and cross-faculty collaborative PL sessions so that she could understand the reasoning behind why we are doing this project and how other faculties approach literacy teaching. She reflected that *"for our early career teachers, I think it's nice to put a name to something that they're already doing to formalise those processes that they're already involved in"*. This was affirmed by beginning teacher, Eva's comment that she found *"having a practical strategy within the Three Pillars Framework was really good to refer back to and also changing out those different strategies within each of the three. I wish that we did more of this at university"*.

For Stuart, there was real value early on in having a faculty-based champion providing background information about the purpose of the project within the context of the PDHPE curriculum. He stated that:

"we worked as a department and kind of brainstormed a few ideas and tried to actually use some existing like [news] articles to [discuss] how would we do this? How do you break it down? How would you teach this? Those [sessions] are probably some of the best PL I've had I walked away and I actually feel like I can use this now and use it confidently because we actually used samples, tangible examples, [where] I was like I've done this activity before [but] not in that way. It was just breaking down like certain articles that in the past I may have not been as confident breaking them down the

literacy behind it. It gave me confidence in going OK, actually, I do know what I am looking for in it. English isn't necessarily our lead, but I feel more confident in my own literacy skills and to try and pass that knowledge on to the students, so it's essentially been an education in literacy."

Similarly, Natalie found that one of the most effective PL strategies, for some secondary faculties, has been having a designated curriculum expert within a faculty or stage championing the framework. This drew on the strength of professional respect that champion already had established, enabling them to leverage that to engage other team members with the project's purpose. This was affirmed by Stuart's reflection on this approach by stating that *"I just think it's really brought in everyone [in the PDHPE faculty] and kind of invigorated their love for teaching and learning as well."*

However, this was not consistently enjoyed by all secondary faculties, where for at least one, a lack of a designated faculty champion frustrated the achievement of the project aims. Natalie notes that because the responsibility for the literacy work didn't really sit with anybody in that faculty, it wasn't championed like it has been in other faculties. It became much more of a "tick a box" approach.

Limitations

Key challenges to the project success included the usual ones within the life of the complex ecosystems of K-12 schools.

1. *Time and resourcing for large scale action research projects within schools can be a challenge.*

Managing a large-scale project within a busy school required the core research team to think laterally and creatively to ensure that the aims of the project were not compromised. As only one of several key school strategic priorities, this project needed to compete with other, equally important initiatives. Similarly, internal staffing movements for those within the core research team was also a complicating factor which arose.

Time within an already busy PL schedule needed to be found, as well as ways to truly engage staff in the learning offered. Both Penny and Nina spoke of the need for greater time to be allocated to teachers within the team for collaboration and preparation of lessons using the strategies within the Three Pillars Framework.

Interestingly, Tammy noted the greatest challenge for the project has been time and the perception (rather than perhaps the reality) of not being given more time. She also pointed out the initial concerns by some secondary faculties about why they were chosen to be in the project, with them adopting a deficit approach to their involvement rather than their intended role as lighthouse practitioners. This highlights the importance of managing communication successfully at the outset of such large-scale projects, which Natalie concurs could have been handled more effectively.

The return of parental consent was more challenging and time consuming than expected, impacting the time available that term for delivering internal mentoring and support to teachers involved in the project. The time constraints of the project have necessitated that data collected be analysed in 2 stages:

- a. Stage 1 - determine the effectiveness of the project's interventions on teachers' confidence and competence to contextualise writing instruction within the teaching of content knowledge. This is the focus of this report.
- b. Stage 2 – determine the impact on student writing competence.

Stage 2 is ongoing and will continue into 2025. The research team is also keen to understand how to sustainably embed the literacy teaching interventions in the programs of curriculum faculties and stages not participating in the initial stages of the project. It would also be interesting to see the longer-term impact (3-5 years), if any, on external testing data of the initial students being tracked within the program e.g. HSC, Allwell and NAPLAN.

2. The literacy interventions used may not work for all students.

Whilst the design of the literacy interventions used were evidence informed, it is important to acknowledge that not all students could see the benefit of using them. For example, Scarlett found in History lessons some students were not engaged in the process of revising drafts of written texts and could not see the value in that activity. Penny also found this to be the case with some students in Geography classes.

This is important to note because from a teaching perspective, agility and discretion needs to be retained by teachers so that instructional routines, including literacy ones, can be differentiated ensuring that all students are progressing towards their learning outcomes. This is an interesting point to be emphasised within any PL delivered to teachers.

3. Staff attrition and internal movement can make the sustainability of the project more difficult.

A significant challenge of the project was with the staffing of the core research team. Changes in leadership responsibilities, including at the Deputy Principal level, have challenged the time core team members were able to allocate to the project. This is something to note for future large-scale school-wide projects being undertaken in the future.

Another complicating factor was the project period for trialing teaching interventions and data collection straddling a calendar year e.g. start Term 3, 2023 to end Term 2, 2024. This meant that whilst the students being tracked remained constant, the teachers involved in the project did not. The core research team used this as an opportunity to broaden the remit of the PL delivered.

4. Not all staff saw the merit in the project's purpose.

Whilst not a significant concern, shifting the PL appetite for teachers was a challenge for the project. Some teachers reflected on how they already incorporate these literacy practices into their instructional routines and did not require any further PL in this area of practice.

For example, Lila, a Science teacher, noted “I don't think it's fundamentally changed the practices that I've employed and the framework would be far more useful for beginning teachers. We have so much content to teach in the later stages of secondary so finding the time for students to be engaged with these activities is harder.”

8. Conclusion

Through this project, Wenona hopes to contribute to a deeper understanding of how to teach writing more effectively in designated cross-curricular areas in Stages 3, 4 and 5 so that both student confidence and achievement are enhanced. Improving teacher understanding and confidence in effective instructional routines in writing is integral to achieving this.

After participating in Wenona's first large scale school-wide action research project, it would be our recommendation that all schools engage in the powerful process of collecting and analysing data within their own classrooms to inform both teacher development and student learning progression. Undoubtedly, our school will continue using this recursive process to gain insights into how our impact, as teachers, on student achievement of outcomes can be improved.

9. Research to Practice Impact

By developing a model of professional learning for teachers focused on pedagogically informed writing strategies drawing on both current Australian and international best practice, this project will contribute to the broader educational community's understanding of how writing can be taught more effectively across curriculum areas in upper primary and lower secondary years. It will also contribute to efforts to smooth literacy transitions for students between these sites.

Writing instruction is currently front and centre of debates in the Australian educational community. Writing is key to success in all subjects. Research in the Australian context has concluded that significant content and pedagogical knowledge are required to provide feedback that can be effective, especially deep knowledge of how written language works (Parr & Timperley, 2010 in AERO, 2022 p18). And yet the 'Australian Writing Survey' 49% reported that teachers feel underprepared to teach writing (Wyatt-Smith et. al., 2018, in AERO, 2022, p11). There is a gap in the available research which this project seeks to address. Compared to the literature focused on reading, the writing literature is modest (Slavin et. al., 2019, in AERO, 2022, p21).

Academic writing to explain and analyse is particularly challenging for students. As teachers, it is important that we extend 'our ways of knowing about how to best teach writing' (Myhill, 2010). It is essential that shared knowledge including metalanguage is developed between teachers and students, to set clear writing goals and provide consistent and effective feedback (AERO 2022, p18). Whilst contextualised language teaching may occur in English classrooms, it is not a common feature of other disciplinary areas, where the focus is on teaching content.

This means that all subject teachers need to develop the requisite metalinguistic knowledge to provide students with 'guidance about how meanings can be shaped through language' to give them 'freedom and power over language' (Czerniewska, 1992 as cited in Myhill, 2010). They need to explicitly model and demonstrate their authorial choices as a writer, scaffolding student learning so that students become aware of, and develop confidence in making, the 'various linguistic choices available to them as meaning-making resources ..., shaping and flexing language for particular effects' (Myhill, 2010). One key focus of this project is to better understand pedagogically sound ways to enhance the capacity of teachers to teach writing within the context of their subject area.

We know that writing proficiency is integral to student achievement during the school years and it influences personal and vocational outcomes post-school (Graham 2006; Graham 2019 as per AERO, 2022, p6). And yet there is a lack of 'high quality and large-scale research in the Australian context' (AERO, 2022, p5) informing instructional teaching and learning routines. This project seeks to explore the pedagogical findings outlined above more deeply in an Australian context, specifically focusing on certain cross curricular NSW Stages 3, 4 & 5 areas.

In this way, this project hopes to contribute more broadly to wider educational community understanding by investigating a contemporary issue of growing concern, as evidenced by recent NAPLAN writing assessment data.

10. Testimonial of Academic Mentor – Pauline Jones

What a privilege it is to be involved in the Wenona Writing project! As an academic, I have brought our genre-based model of text and grammar to many different school sites and it's always interesting to see how the work is taken up in each different context. Wenona is unique in that this research was initiated by the school, that the research team was familiar with the data on school writing outcomes and with the research literature. They were well prepared and ready to tackle the issue – which they have done beautifully. Natasha's recontextualization of the Teaching Language in Context literacy learning cycle for secondary subject areas has facilitated valuable discussions about writing (and other aspects of literacy) within faculties. The enthusiasm of many teachers was palpable and their considered reflections on the project invaluable. Carlie's leadership of the junior school has enabled teachers to really power up the writing skills of the upper primary students such that they are well ready for the demands of secondary school. Together with the school-based research team, Natasha and Carlie have developed a strong project that faces both research and practice. The teachers' accounts of their experiences in the project have been overwhelmingly positive and their perspectives on the different teaching practices are very illuminating. I look forward to the next stage as we consider the impact of the project on students' writing outcomes. To disseminate the findings of the project, we're planning some academic papers as well as some practical guides for teachers. These will impact teachers' practice and initial teachers' preparation beyond Wenona.

Professor Pauline Jones

University of Wollongong

20/09/24

Acknowledgement

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We also would like to acknowledge the significant contributions of the committed and professional classrooms teachers at Wenona involved in this research project, and their principal who supported this research project. And finally, we are grateful for the willingness of the students participating in this project for sharing of their insights as we strive to improve their literacy learning outcomes.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 - Three Pillars Instructional Framework

Appendix 2 - The Reading Pillar – Instructional Strategies

Appendix 3 - The Talking Pillar – Instructional Strategies

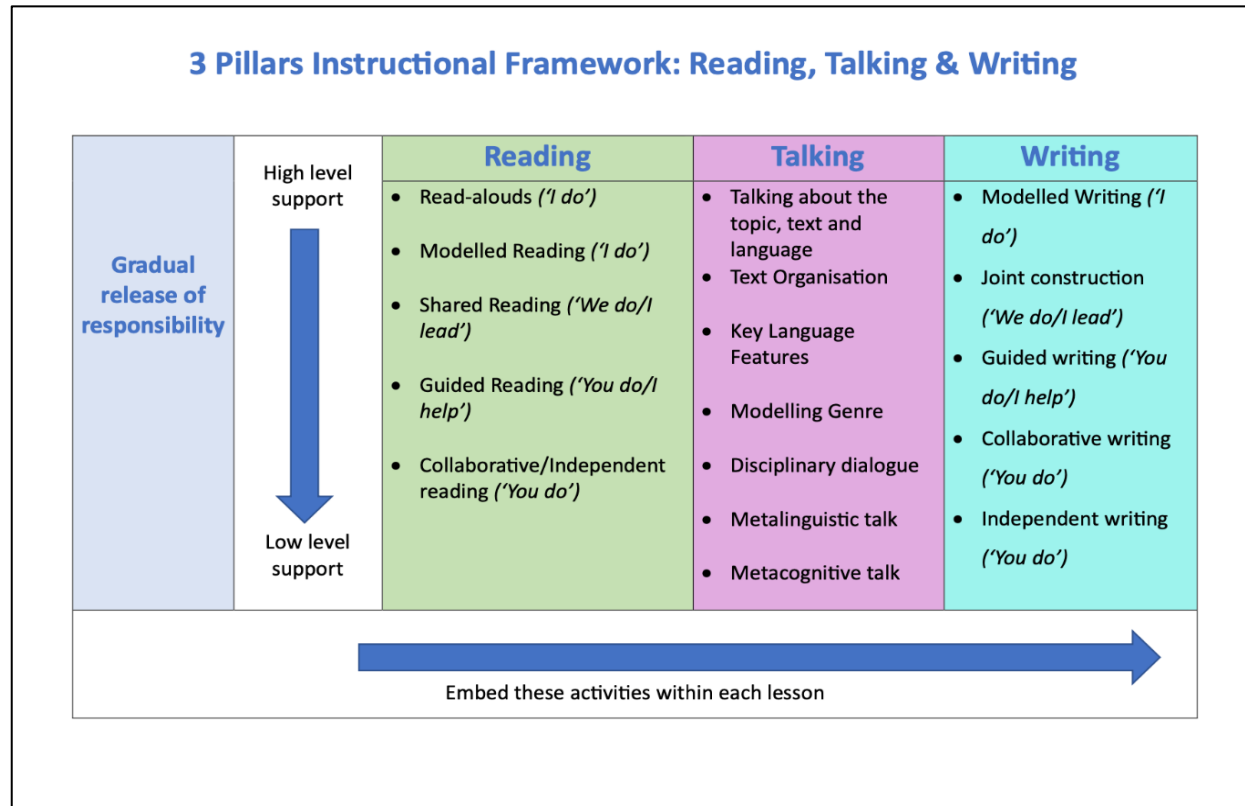
Appendix 4 - The Writing Pillar – Instructional Strategies

Appendix 5 - Participant Information Statements – Students

Appendix 6 - Teacher Interview Script – Baseline & Final Interviews

Appendix 1 - Three Pillars Instructional Framework

3 Pillars Instructional Framework: Reading, Talking & Writing

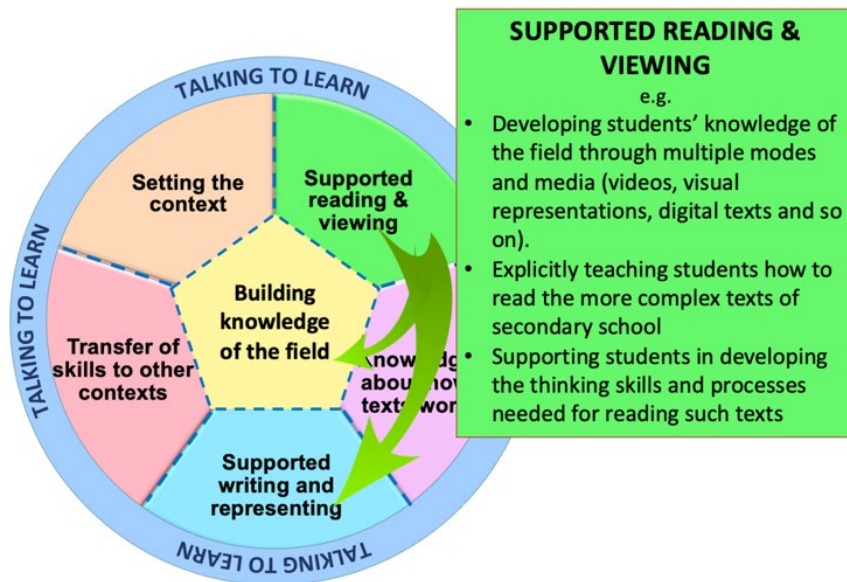


Framework developed using the work of, and in consultation with, Prof Beverly Derewianka and Assoc Prof Pauline Jones, University of Wollongong. Also sourced from: [Dept of Education, Victoria: Literacy Teaching Toolkit](#) and Debra Myhill, 2016' Writing conversations: Metalinguistic talk about writing'; Draft as 24 May 2023

Appendix 2 - The Reading Pillar – Instructional Strategies


The focus is:

- on **developing students' knowledge of the field** of content knowledge through multiple modes and media;
- **explicitly teaching** students how to read the more complex texts of secondary school; and
- supporting students in **developing the thinking skills** and processes needed for reading such texts.



BEFORE READING	WHILE READING	AFTER READING
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Select a worthy text (relevant, age/level appropriate, well-written) • Set a purpose for reading • Preview/skim for overall gist and text organization 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on purpose • Skim 'chunks' of text for meaning and relevance • Identify key terms and sections that you find difficult and discuss them • Use comprehension strategies when useful (e.g. predict, re-read, read ahead, • Interact with the text (e.g. highlight main ideas, annotate, ask questions, summarise in the margin) • Interpret visuals such as diagrams, illustrations, maps • Take notes (e.g. with a graphic organizer) • Make connections to self, to other texts, to the world, to images 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use your reading to answer text-dependent questions relating to the reading purpose/ topic/ task. • Discuss reactions and answers with others • Use your notes to contribute to your writing draft

110

Gradual release of responsibility		Teaching Strategy	Practical Application
		Read-alouds ('I do')	This is where the teacher simply reads a text or extract aloud to the class or a group either for enjoyment and interest or to support understanding through the use of expression (e.g. intonation, pausing, volume, gestures and facial expressions).
		Modelled Reading ('I do')	The teacher models the strategies he/she would use when making sense of a relevant text, using a 'think-aloud' technique. See below. Note teacher stops at selected points to engage the students with the text
		Shared Reading ('We do/I lead')	Teachers should not assume that students can read independently the kinds of texts they will encounter across the learning areas. They need to be guided to read key texts strategically and with purpose (i.e. in relation to the task). Teacher should read the text with the class, engaging the students by asking questions, dealing with vocabulary in context, explaining the relationship between written text and images, interpreting key messages, demonstrating comprehension strategies (e.g. skimming to get an overview of the text), drawing attention to relevant language features (e.g. simple sentence for effect, tightly crafted sentence to express complex ideas, unusual structures etc)
		Guided Reading (differentiated support) ('You do/I help')	A key differentiation strategy where the teacher creates targeted proficiency groups for students who might be struggling to read the text and provides stronger scaffolding and/or less complex texts
		Collaborative/Independent Reading ('You do')	Opportunities are provided for the student to apply strategies learnt to their reading, often in collaboration with others and working on reading tasks related to the current task.

Framework developed using the work of, and in consultation with, Prof Beverly Derewianka and Prof Pauline Jones, University of Wollongong. Also sourced from: [Dept of Education, Victoria: Literacy Teaching Toolkit](#) and Debra Myhill, 2016' Writing conversations: Metalinguistic talk about writing'; Draft as 24 May 2023


Appendix 3 - The Talking Pillar – Instructional Strategies

Teaching Strategy	Practical Application
Text Organisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Each genre is organized differently. A genre will unfold in characteristic stages depending on its purpose. During this phase of the cycle, we deconstruct a model/mentor text similar to the one being written by the students. The model text might be written by the teacher (at the level of a high-achieving student) but could also be a published text, a high-quality text written by a student from a previous year (or an amalgam of student texts), or a modified text. (If you have written the model text, share with your students your drafts and the process you went through in composing the text.) At this stage, the teacher would typically project a text that he/she has carefully selected in relation to the task. Students are provided with their own copy to annotate. The teacher would guide the students to observe how the text is typically structured into relatively predictable stages. Within each major stage of the genre, students might be guided to identify minor phases (e.g. development of setting or characters in a narrative; foreshadowing of arguments in a persuasive text).
Key Language Features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> When the written text being produced by the student has developed to a point where the content/field has been more fully developed and the overall structure of the text is in hand, it is time to start crafting the text in terms of language choices. At this stage, it would be appropriate to focus on selected language features that are characteristic: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> of the genre (or of a particular stage of the genre) of the topic/task of observed whole-class needs. Such features might include effective sentence structure, multimodal elements, attention to reader needs and interests, citing of references, expression of attitudes, resources for rich description, the language of cause and effect, and the use of cohesive devices. It often takes more than one encounter with models of the genre for learners to internalise the focus genre and its distinctive patterns of language. They learn about language at the levels of text, clause, group or phrase, and word, and about different kinds of images in order to answer such questions as <i>Why that choice in that text? What is the effect of that choice?</i> The class is developing a shared metalanguage to refer to various aspects of texts (the purpose and name of the genre, the labelling of stages and phases, the terminology used for the various language features).
Modelling Genre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teacher to write a model text for the selected task - write it at a level equivalent to a high standard student text. As you write it, reflect on what it revealed. In light of this experience, do you need to rethink your language/literacy focus? How are you going to use your model text? What might you model from your model text in relation to the task and assessment criteria

Framework developed using the work of, and in consultation with, Prof Beverly Derewianka and Prof Pauline Jones, University of Wollongong. Also sourced from: [Dept of Education, Victoria: Literacy Teaching Toolkit](#) and Debra Myhill, 2016' Writing conversations: Metalinguistic talk about writing'; Draft as 24 May 2023

Appendix 4 - The Writing Pillar – Instructional Strategies

Supported Writing – Pillar 3: Overview of Teaching & Learning Strategies

Gradual release of responsibility		Teaching Strategy	Practical Application
		Modelled Writing	Modelled writing can be employed as a whole class or small group strategy. Modelled writing might also blend with joint constructions and guided writing sessions. Role of Teacher: Before students are asked to produce a particular discipline specific text, it is vital that they learn about the features of the required text. This marks a shift away from the content of the writing to the form, or craft, of writing.
		Joint Construction	The teacher leads the shared writing of a text, demonstrating the process of creating a written text whilst also encouraging student contributions. During joint constructions, student contributions are usually oral and shaped by the teacher to reflect academic written language. Role of Teacher: The focus for the joint construction will include choices about whole text, paragraph, sentence structure and vocabulary. The teacher guides the shared writing of the joint construction, eliciting contributions from the students and demonstrating how to shape these into coherent, interesting written text
		Guided Writing	Strategic writing instruction involves teachers responding to students at their point of need. During guided writing, the teacher works with a small group of students on a specific aspect of writing. It can be thought of as a group conference or small group lesson undertaken to strategically respond to an identified challenge. The formation of the group and learning focus is fluid and based on ongoing formative assessment processes. Balancing the role of the teacher and the role of the student: The value of the guided writing process is the small group collaborative discussion and problem solving, coupled with explicit teaching targeted at the students' point of need. The teacher might engage students in writing while making alternative suggestions and prompting reflection on choices throughout the writing process or ask students to revise and justify choices from a prior piece of writing.
		Collaborative Writing	At this point, students have sufficient knowledge of the field and know how to shape this into a coherent text. Collaborative writing provides students with the opportunity to employ the various skills and knowledge they have developed in the context of peer learning, clarifying their understanding through discussion, and checking in with others.
		Independent Writing	Having experienced comprehensive guidance and scaffolding in developing texts, students are now in a strong position to compose independently. This time provides an opportunity for students to explore and extend new strategies and understandings in a risk-free environment. It is through this active attention to writing that the learning is consolidated.

Framework developed using the work of, and in consultation with, Prof Beverly Derewianka and Prof Pauline Jones, University of Wollongong. Also sourced from: [Dept of Education, Victoria: Literacy Teaching Toolkit](#) and Debra Myhill, 2016 'Writing conversations: Metalinguistic talk about writing'; Draft as 24 May 2023

Appendix 5 – Participation Information Statement – Students

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET FOR STUDENTS

PROJECT TITLE: Writing to Learn at Wenona

Dear Student

You are invited to take part in the “Writing to Learn at Wenona” project, which is being conducted with academics from the University of Wollongong at your school. We are investigating a new teaching approach that focuses on writing in different subject areas.

To help us understand the impact of the new approach, we are observing writing lessons in some of your classes. We will also interview a small number of **focus students** about their experiences of the teaching approach. We will also analyse their writing in different subjects. We would like to invite you to participate in our study as one of the focus students.

WHAT WILL PARTICIPATING INVOLVE?

We will collect data between July 2023 and June 2024. Your participation will involve:

Participating in classroom observations: You may be observed in your routine classroom activities in different subjects. Observations will happen during 2 lessons when you are working on writing. We would also like to video record these observations.

Participating in an interview: In addition to your routine classroom activities, we invite you to participate in an interview for research purposes. If you agree to participate as a **Focus Student**, you will be interviewed twice, once at the beginning of the project and then again at the end so that you can provide information to us about how you experienced the new approach to teaching writing. You will participate in the interviews with another student so that you feel comfortable speaking with us.

The interviews will occur in an open space such as the school library or classroom. You may be asked to bring along some of your writing. We would like to audio record this interview. The written version of this interview will be analysed by the research team so that we can understand your experiences fully.

Each interview will take about 30 minutes during lunch time to minimise disruption to your class learning. When this is not possible, you may be interviewed during the class time in which case you will miss around thirty-minutes of learning time for each interview.

In the interviews we will ask questions such as: *What kinds of writing are you asked to do in English (or Science, or PDHPE) What is easy? What do you find challenging?* And when we are looking at your writing sample with you: *Tell me what you think your teacher wanted you to show in this writing? What do you think you did well in this piece of writing?* We will give you a copy of the questions before the interview.

Providing work samples: If you agree to be a **Focus Student**, we would like to collect samples of your writing (including any brought to the interview) throughout a unit of work. With your permission, we will also take photographs of your work.

WHY ARE WE DOING THIS RESEARCH?

The research will benefit teachers and students by helping us:

- Identify the literacy skills students need to be successful in different subjects
- Design and trial teaching practices that best support students to write in different subjects
- Understand how the new teaching approach impacts students' writing.

WILL THERE BE ANY RISKS, INCONVENIENCES OR DISCOMFORTS?

All the interviewers who conduct the student interviews have a current NSW Government Working with Children Check. As we have described, the interviews will be held at a time and place that suits you and your teacher. We will also try to avoid disrupting your learning as much as possible.

WHAT WILL THE DATA BE USED FOR?

The data we collect will be used to support students' writing across different subject areas at Wenona. Your teacher will have access to data collected in the project, including your interviews and work samples. With your consent, video recordings and photographs gathered may be used as examples for other teachers at your school to better understand the different types of writing that students are asked to complete.

Outside of Wenona, the data may be published as examples in education publications such as workshops, conference proceedings, journal articles, university teacher preparation materials, and research reports. Pseudonyms or codes will be used in the place of real names or identifying details in any such publications.

WILL I BE IDENTIFIED AS A PARTICIPANT?

The data collected in the research will be strictly confidential. You and your teacher will not be identified in any part of the research. Your name will be removed from your written work upon collection. Your real name and the name of the school will not be used in any presentations or reports.

Information which may identify you will be removed for analysis and future reporting. All data will be stored on a password-protected computer; any hard data will be stored in a locked cabinet. This means that no reports, documents or presentations produced from the research will identify you or your school.

If you do not consent to be included in the video recordings, you will be seated so that you are outside of the video capture area. No data associated with you will be collected.

WHAT ARE THE RIGHTS OF PARTICIPANTS?

Your involvement in the study is voluntary and you can choose to withdraw from participating as a focus student at any time, including during the interview. This means that any data that have been gathered about you until this point will not be used in the research. Any video data in which you appear will be edited and removed.

If you chose to withdraw, your current or future relationship with the University of Wollongong and Wenona School will not be affected. Similarly, if you chose to participate or not, this decision will

not affect any current or future relationship with the University of Wollongong and Wenona School. If you chose not to participate, you will still be able to participate in the classroom activities, but not the research (the interviews and collection of work samples for research).

WHAT IF I HAVE MORE QUESTIONS?

If you have any questions about the nature of this research and the way it is conducted or **if you wish to withdraw from the research**, you and/or your parent/caregiver can contact the Principal Investigator, Associate Professor Pauline Jones on (02) 4221 3322 or email: paulinej@uow.edu.au

ETHICS REVIEW AND COMPLAINTS

This study has been reviewed by the UOW Social Sciences Human Research Ethics Committee (Reference 2023/096). It will be monitored by the UOW Social Sciences Human Research Ethics Committee and the school-based ethics committee. If at any time during the research you have any concerns or complaints about the way the research has been conducted, you should contact the UOW Ethics Officer on 02 42392191 or email uow-humanethics@uow.edu.au.

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Appendix 6 – Teacher Interview Script – Baseline & Final Interviews

Sample teacher interview questions

1. Do you find the pillars a useful way of thinking about how to support students' learning?
2. Have you been trying out any of the teaching practices (e.g. shared reading, collaborative deconstruction of a model text, joint construction)?
 - If so, which have you tried? How did it go?
 - If so, how have the students responded? If not, what are the barriers or challenges for trying out the practices?
 - Would you like some further support?
3. Let's talk about your experience in the project. Could you provide us with an indication of whether your involvement has brought about any new understandings about how to support students in meeting the literacy demands of upper primary/lower secondary school, and writing in particular? If so, could you give some examples, e.g.
 - the role of writing in learning – particularly the writing of extended texts
 - encouraging deep learning and transferable skills
 - identifying the big idea and a related culminating task
 - breaking the culminating task into contributing tasks
 - identifying a text type (or text types) relevant to the culminating task (e.g. a system explanation, an analytical literary response, a consequential explanation)
 - formative assessment; assessment for/as learning (e.g. success criteria; 'evolving drafts' that reflect the writing process)
 - other?
4. What will you do next in your writing instruction as a result of the PL?

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