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MINISTRY OF EDUCATION
TE TĀHUHU O TE MĀTAURANGA

Effective Practices that Support Literacy

As you read through these practices, consider:

» What effective practices are already a strength for you? How do you know?

» What practices do you want to further develop or strengthen? Who or what could help?

» What can you do now to reflect on and further develop your literacy teaching practice?

1. Promote a positive attitude to literacy

» Develop your own knowledge of what literacy looks like in your subject area – What are typical text types? What are good examples of writing? What types of writing tasks are common? What subject specific vocabulary do ākonga need to learn?

» Share your own reading habits with ākonga.

» Display and share interesting texts that are relevant to your area.

» Encourage ākonga to share when and what they are reading.

» Share the challenges you yourself are experiencing with writing to show that writing is a complex and challenging process.

» Talk with ākonga about the different times writing is needed in school and in personal life.

2. Provide many opportunities for ākonga to write and read

» Support ākonga to read and write frequently, on a regular basis, and for different purposes.

» Make use of small periods of time to increase reading and writing opportunities eg, you could use the last 5 minutes of a lesson to record important ideas in a learning diary that have been covered during the lesson.

» Give ākonga opportunities to use writing as a tool to clarify ideas.

» Ask ākonga to write their thoughts down before sharing their ideas orally.

3. Connect reading and writing

» Get ākonga to write about what they have read, as writing improves students' comprehension.

» Establish the connection between reading and writing – reading is a source of ideas and language for writing.

» Support ākonga to make judgements about what might be useful for a subsequent writing task; they can annotate texts or make notes.

» Use a graphic organiser for reading and then for subsequent writing; the graphic organiser is a scaffold of important ideas and a plan for writing.

4. Show how you read and write

» Analyse texts with ākonga so that they start to build knowledge of what texts look like in your subject area.

» Model five key reading strategies[1]:
  • activating background knowledge
  • questioning
  • analysing text structure
  • creating mental images
  • summarising.

» Make your own writing processes visible to ākonga by sharing how you plan, compose, write, review and revise.

» With ākonga, unpack questions and writing tasks by talking about what might be needed in terms of text type and structure, register, ideas, sentence structures and vocabulary.

5. Support ākonga to read critically across texts

» Get students into the habit of predicting the audience, purpose, and content of texts they are about to read, and evaluate those predictions as they read.

» Give attention to how the writer's purpose is linked to text and language features.

» Provide ākonga with opportunities to read texts with conflicting or different information, and use a tool like an Inquiry Chart to synthesise them.

» Support ākonga to analyse and evaluate text, visual and online resources using a framework or tool eg, the Rauru Whakarare Evaluation Framework (Feekery & Jeffrey, 2019) [2].

» Support ākonga to use a viewing log when working across multi-media texts.

6. Help ākonga build vocabulary knowledge

» Check your own knowledge of different types of words: technical words - essential for a subject or topic (eg, parallelogram, migration), general academic words - that can be used across many subjects (eg, aspect, locate), high frequency words - the 2,000-3,000 most common words that occur in everyday and school contexts (eg, like, find), and low frequency words - that are unusual but not useful or necessary (eg, behemoth).

» Give ākonga opportunities to encounter words repeatedly, and in a variety of contexts.

» Give ākonga opportunities to try using new words they have heard or read.

» Make sure ākonga know most high frequency words.

» Spend most time on general academic words, and technical words.

» Support ākonga to make distinctions between the everyday meaning of words and the subject-specific meaning of words (eg, odd, mean).

» Go beyond focusing on definitional knowledge of a word – understand the context it is used in, and what other words it is commonly used with, what connotations the word has, etc.

» Build up ākonga knowledge of word parts (prefixes, Latin roots, Greek roots/word parts, suffixes) that are useful for decoding word meanings and building up vocabulary knowledge.

7. Scaffold writing by focusing on text structure

» Support ākonga to become familiar with important text types[3] in your subject area.

» Analyse examples of text types so that ākonga can see the overall structure, the parts, the types of sentences used and vocabulary.

» As part of planning for writing, discuss audience and purpose then link to text type.

» Provide an outline of the structure of text types so that ākonga know what they have to include.

» Show ākonga examples of texts that do not conform to text type expectations and discuss why.

8. Scaffold writing by focusing on language

» Provide ākonga with support on the language aspects of a writing task. This helps free up their capacity to focus on other aspects of the task.

» Brainstorm vocabulary, phrases and sentences before starting a writing task.

» Provide a planning template for writing.

» Rehearse ideas in oral form first before writing – with a partner or in a group.

» Provide questions or sentence starters for parts of a writing task.

» Give students practice in manipulating language structures eg, combining parts of a sentence in different ways.

9. Use a writer's checklist [4,5]

» Design checklists to support ākonga to check whether they have:
  • covered specific content or ideas
  • structured their text according to text type expectations
  • addressed parts of the writing process (planning, composing, reviewing and revising)
  • reviewed their text for spelling, grammar, and punctuation

» Model the use of a checklist for ākonga.

» Encourage ākonga to remember aspects of a checklist for future writing tasks (eg, a checklist based on parts of a research report in Science) so that this knowledge becomes internalised.

10. Give feedback on writing

» Give ākonga feedback at different times during the writing process.

» Be selective - focus on particular aspects of writing for feedback.

» Reformulate texts written by ākonga and ask them to compare the versions and evaluate the changes.

» Encourage ākonga to use tools to check surface level aspects of text such as spelling and grammar.