

TEACHER DEMONSTRATION

Most shared writing sessions begin with demonstration or modelling by the teacher. The teacher demonstrates how to write a text – how to use a particular feature, or compose a text type – maintaining a clear focus on the objective(s). She or he thinks the process through aloud, rehearsing the sentence before writing, making changes to its construction or word choice and explaining why one form or word is preferable to another. The teacher writes the sentence, rereads it and changes it again if necessary. She or he demonstrates at least two sentences. The teacher does not take contributions from the children at this point but will expect the children to offer opinions on her or his choice of words or construction of sentences. Every so often shared writing is used to orchestrate a number of different objectives, calling upon all that has been learned so far. The length of time spent on demonstration will depend on the type of writing, the objective and the attention span of the children. It is important not to try to pack in too much teaching in these sessions but to move on to the children having a go themselves.

TEACHER SCRIBING

The pupils now make contributions building upon the teacher's initial demonstration. The teacher focuses and limits the pupils' contributions to the objective(s), eg previous sentence level work, reading of similar texts, word level work, prompt sheets, writing frameworks, or planning sheets. The teacher challenges pupils' contributions in order to refine their understanding and compositional skills.

The children can offer their contributions by raising their hands, but more considered contributions and fuller class participation can be achieved by asking the children, individually or in pairs, to note down their idea, eg word, clause, sentence. When the teacher receives a contribution from the children, she or he will explain its merits or ask the children to do so. The teacher may ask for a number of contributions before making and explaining her choice. If the children use dry-wipe boards and thick-nibbed pens, they can hold their contributions up for the teacher to read. The teacher can then decide either to choose a contribution that will move the lesson on quickly or a contribution which will stimulate discussion and offer the opportunity to make a teaching point.

SUPPORTED COMPOSITION

The focus here is on the children's composition. Children might use dry-wipe boards or notebooks to write in pairs, or individually, a limited amount of text, sharply focused upon a specific objective. This needs to be swift, and once sentences are complete they should be held up so that the teacher can make an immediate assessment. Successful examples can be reviewed with the class, whilst misconceptions are identified and corrected. The aim is to practise a number of times until the large majority, if not all, of the class have mastered the objective to the point where they can apply it when they write. Progress should be visible and swift.