# A TEACHING AND LEARNING CYCLE

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The teaching-learning cycle is based on the notion of having high expectations supported by strong scaffolding and explicit teaching. It is based on Vygotskian principles of learning through interaction with more proficient others in the context of shared experience. The activities are carefully ordered to build up students' knowledge and abilities so that they can experience success. It is not, however, intended as a strict sequence – teachers will move between stages of the cycle as needed.
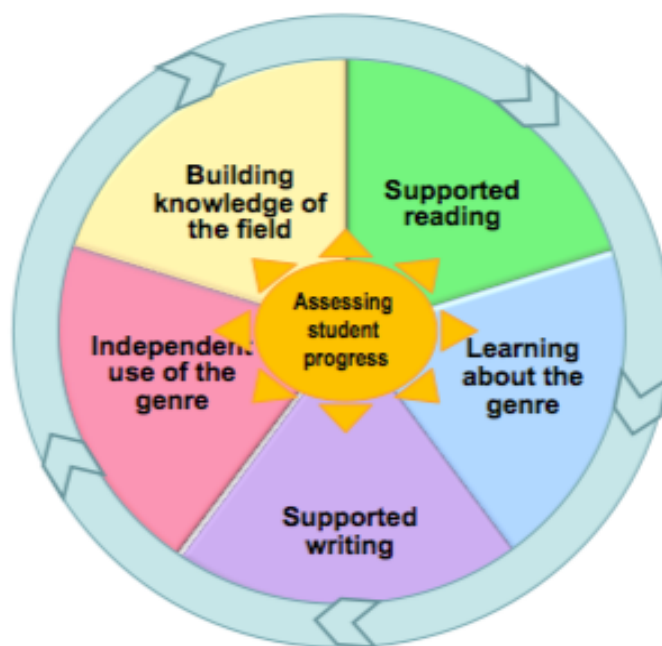

In particular, the teacher:
- identifies the language demands of the task;
- explicitly teaches students the genres needed for success in schooling;
- is concerned with deep learning of content together with learning the language of the content area;
- makes explicit the learning intention and success criteria for each stage of the cycle;
- constantly assesses students' progress at each stage of the cycle and responds to identified needs.

A. INITIAL FIELD BUILDING

In the first stage, *Building knowledge of the field*, the teaching and learning cycle generally involves a focus on engaging students, finding out what they know of the topic under focus, and beginning to develop shared understandings. This field building continues throughout the other stages of the teaching learning cycle so that students' understanding of the topic accumulates and becomes increasingly sophisticated. It is important that this knowledge is shared (rather than simply drawing on prior experience or personal knowledge) so that all students can contribute equally to discussions and can write confidently about the subject matter. Emphasis at this point is usually on students' spoken language, although the talk will frequently take place around written text, image, and other artefacts. This stage can include such activities as hands-on tasks, videos, computer apps, field experience, and guest interviews. Importantly, the activities are interactive so that students have opportunities to use, hear, and see the language associated with the topic.

Start writing

Drawing on any prior knowledge and/or the preliminary understandings built through the initial field-building, students could be asked to write a first rough draft early in the cycle (notes, dot points, images). This is the raw material that they will continue revising and crafting as they work through the unit, incorporating content and language points from focus lessons along the way. This rough draft (and subsequent drafts) also provides the teacher with insights into student strengths and weaknesses and potential teaching points (e.g. during guided reading/writing sessions). By starting the writing process early and revisiting the evolving text often, with input and guidance, the writing task is not as daunting as when the writing is all left to the end. (It is important to establish routines for saving each draft, whether hard copy or digital.)
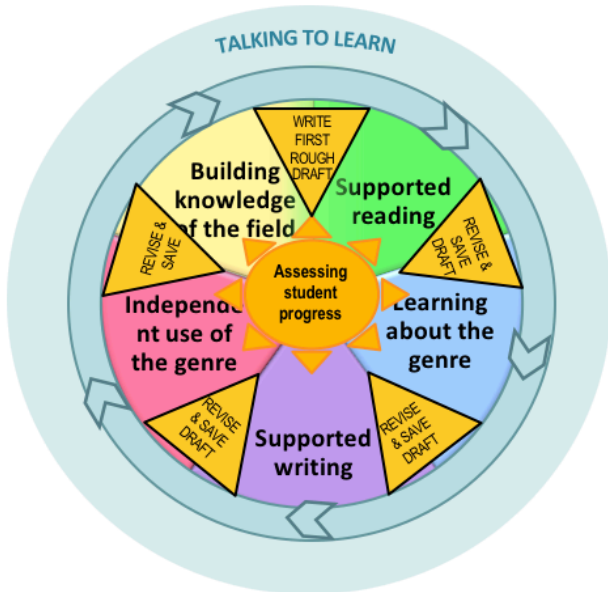
B. SUPPORTED READING

THE READING-WRITING CONNECTION

In order to write, students need to gather information and ideas from texts they read and other sources. Most students, however, will need support in how to read the increasingly complex texts of school.

The *Supported Reading* stage continues to build knowledge of the field, but now with an emphasis on reading carefully selected texts or text extracts in the topic area. This stage recognises that students need to be taught how to read texts that are more challenging, dense and abstract, particularly in the secondary years. The teacher will typically orient the students to the genre and the content of the text and will guide the class to skim the text to get an idea of how it will unfold by looking at contents pages, headings, sub-headings, images, captions, and so on. The teacher might then focus on key paragraphs, helping the students to gain meaning from the text, particularly in relation to the task at hand. The teacher can support the students in vocabulary development, scanning for specific
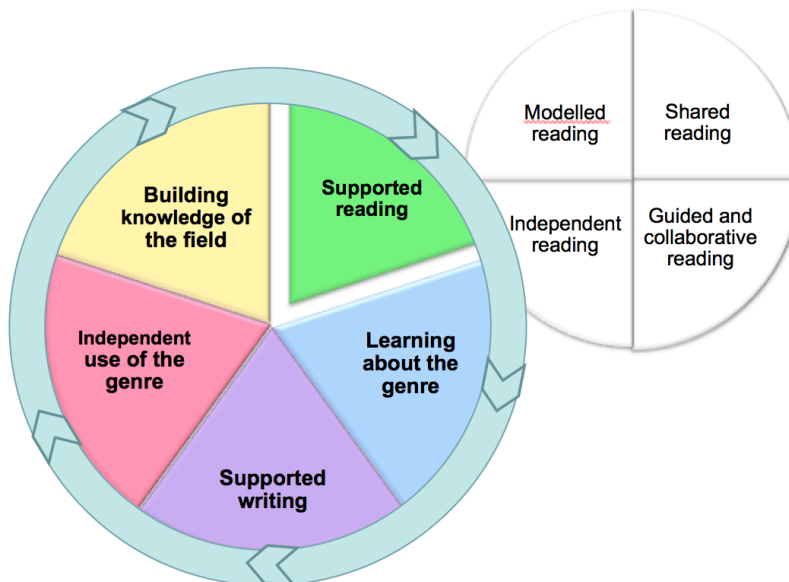
information, practising research skills, taking notes using graphic organisers, annotating the text with questions and comments, and answering text-dependent questions.

While any number of proven activities can be used to support students' reading, most teachers will be familiar with the common practices of modelled, shared, guided, collaborative and independent reading.

MODELLED READING

This is where the teacher models the comprehension strategies he/she would use when reading a relevant text, using a 'think-aloud' technique:

'When I first start reading a factual text, I usually skim it to see what it will be about.'
[Explanation: We usually understand a text better if we can predict its purpose and how it is organized.]

'I wonder why they needed wood?'
[Explanation: Active readers interact with the text, asking questions and being curious.]

Sunday, we we... ...d for another ...ay a little to the south, called by the ...ete our wood and water...

In a valley between two very high hills, we saw a curious arch, opposite the sea. ... Indeed the whole country abou... beyond description, and, if properly cultivated, would be... hills are cloathed with beautiful flowering shrubs, inter...

'How could I work out the meaning of this word?'
[Explanation: The meaning of unfamiliar words can often be worked out by getting clues from the surrounding text.]
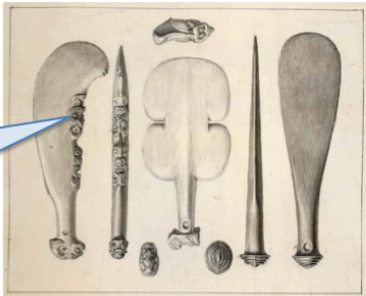
'If I close my eyes, I can picture the scenery in my mind.'
[Explanation: I understand and remember better if I can visualize the information.]

...e air ...aking it perf... ...ay ...in great abundance, and many trees that ...otatoes and plantains are cultivated near the

...h who entertained us with the military exercises of the natives, which are performed with the Patoo-Patoo and the lance. ... A stake was

'Which one would be the patoo-patoo?'
[Explanation: Good readers look for the relationship between the written text and accompanying images']

...would have split any man's skull. ...

Modelled reading is more effective when teachers not only 'think aloud' but explain and justify the strategies they are using, give students a chance to ask similar questions of the text, and provide intensive practice for students in using these strategies. It is often advisable to focus on only one or two strategies at a time that are particularly relevant to the task, the genre and/or the students' observed needs.

SHARED READING

We can't assume that students can read independently the kinds of texts they will encounter across the learning areas, particularly complex texts, digital/online and multimodal texts. They need to be guided to read key texts strategically and with purpose (e.g. in relation to the task). In shared reading sessions, the teacher reads 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;

consulting index), drawing attention to relevant language features (eg simple sentence for effect, tightly crafted sentence to express complex ideas, unusual structures, nominalization), and so on.

A reading session might integrate elements of read-aloud by the teacher, some modelled reading, and some shared reading.

GUIDED READING (e.g. DIFFERENTIATED SUPPORT)

Students will generally have different levels of reading proficiency. By grouping them according to need, teachers are able to work with students with similar needs and proficiency to extend their reading capacity. While various groups work collaboratively on reading activities associated with the current task, the teacher is free to work with a particular group on guided reading activities to address specific aspects of reading relevant texts.

If a teacher has identified, for example, that certain students are having problems following the cohesive relationships in a text, the group might be guided to identify how the language creates links across the text. Some students might need support in decoding words in a mentor text while others might need help with more advanced strategies such as unpacking dense, compact sentences.

COLLABORATIVE/INDEPENDENT READING

While the teacher is working with a particular group, the other students can do structured reading activities related to the current curriculum task in pairs or groups or independently.

It is useful to base reading activities on skills and strategies that have been introduced previously in the unit, using texts relevant to the topic, e.g.:
- **Identify** main gist; summarise paragraphs; underline topic sentences
- Identify text purpose
- **Analyse** the function of each stage of the text
- **Scan** text for specific information (e.g. related to development of written task)
- Highlight sections/words hard to understand
- Colour-code target language features (e.g. different types of sentences, lengthy noun groups)
- Make structured **notes** relevant to the task
- **Synthesise** information from different sources
- Represent the text **visually** (e.g. transfer information from the text to a graphic organizer)
- Make **inferences**
- Ask **questions** of the text
- Identify **relationship** between written text and accompanying images
- **Interpret** diagrams
- Make **connections** to self, text/s and the world
- **Evaluate/improve** poorly written text
- **Appreciate** features of a well-crafted text

The activities should preferably involve multiple readings and physical annotation of the text, drawing on skills such as problem-solving, decision-making, evaluating, summarizing, synthesizing, note-making, and so on.

The following can be used to support students' comprehension:

- Massive exposure through extensive and/or targeted reading of rich texts (fiction and non-fiction).
- Constant reinforcement in class and use of metalanguage to name up the comprehension strategies.
- In **modelled** reading, demonstrate how you would read a text with challenging sentences, thinking aloud about how you might tackle them.
- In **shared** reading, discuss the language of the text. Draw students' attention to author's choice of effective sentence structure (eg simple sentence for effect, tightly crafted sentence to express complex ideas, unusual structures, nominalization). Use authentic texts/sentences, including from students' own texts where appropriate.
- In **guided** reading, listen to students read sentences aloud and respond to cues that indicate a lack of awareness of sentence structure (e.g. intonation, pausing, fluency).
- In **collaborative** reading (pairs/group), provide tasks involving analysis/ critical appreciation of choices made by authors/students (e.g. colour-coding of different types of clauses).
- In **independent** reading, ask students to review their own written texts (e.g. reading sentences aloud for coherence).
- Information transfer activities - demonstrating understanding by converting information from, e.g.:
  - from image to oral
  - from image to written text
  - from oral to image
  - from oral to written text
  - from written text to oral
  - from written text to image
 - from oral to dramatization

As students extend their understanding of the topic through reading and other field-building activities, they can integrate their new knowledge into their evolving draft.

C. LEARNING ABOUT THE GENRE

Now that students have started to generate ideas for their writing, the emphasis at this point turns more to the composition and crafting of the students' written texts.

The focus shifts from field to genre, focusing on the purpose for writing. It may involve the teacher engaging the class in deconstructing an example of the genre that the students will later be writing. It often takes more than one encounter with models of the genre for learners to
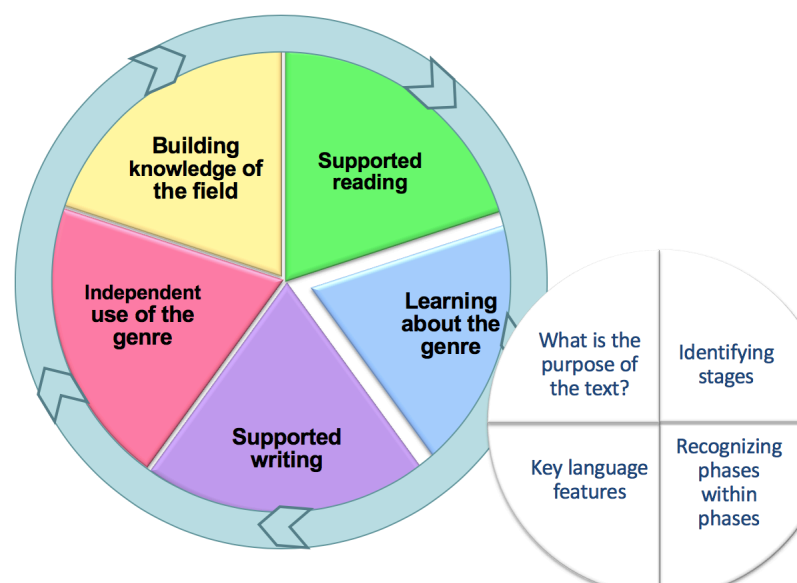
internalise the focus genre and its distinctive patterns of language. At this stage, the class is developing a shared metalanguage to refer to various aspects of texts (the purpose and name of the genre, the labeling of stages and phases, the terminology used for the various language features).

During this phase of the cycle, we deconstruct a model 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 high quality text written by a student from a previous year (or an amalgam of student texts), or a published text – which might need to be modified. (If you have written the model text, share with your students your drafts and the process you went through in composing the text.)

Again, a variety of activities can be used to familiarise students with the characteristics of the genre (e.g. comparing genres, sorting and sequencing). It is common, however, to begin by reinforcing the purpose for writing, followed by the typical stages that the text goes through in achieving its purpose, and selected language features.

THE SOCIAL PURPOSE (GENRE)

The instructional task will probably involve a particular purpose for writing, such as describing, explaining, recounting or persuading. Sometimes the purpose will be relatively clear-cut and obvious. At other times, however, the task might involve a combination of genres or a less common genre.

See the final page for an overview of genres typically found in educational contexts.

HOW IS THE TEXT ORGANIZED?

Each genre is organized differently. A genre will unfold in characteristic stages depending on its purpose.

At this stage, the teacher is helping students to identify the typical stages a genre goes through in achieving its purpose. A procedure, for example, would generally include the goal of the activity, the materials involved, and the steps for carrying out the task.

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).

Students can be asked to revise their evolving draft, now focusing on how they are organizing their text into coherent stages.

KEY LANGUAGE FEATURES

Now that the text 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 of the genre (or of a particular stage of the genre) and/or the topic/task, and/or observed student needs. Students 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 *Why that choice in that text? What is the effect of that choice on meaning?* Depending on the genre, such features might include cohesive devices, 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 effective sentence structure. It is generally advisable to focus on only one or two features at this stage and perhaps consolidating previous learning about language if appropriate.

At this point, the class can be guided to again revise their draft, highlighting changes they have made in relation to the target language feature/s of the unit. This allows for efficient conferencing with teacher and/or peers, as the focus features are easily identified, allowing the student to explain why certain choices have been made and their effect.
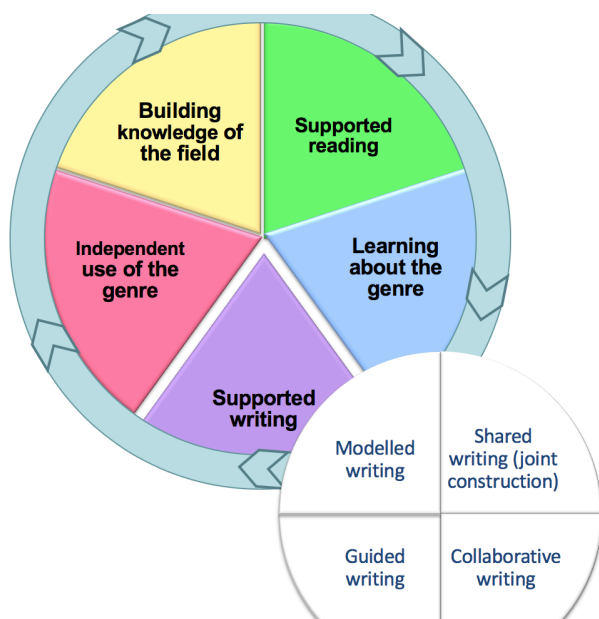
D. SUPPORTED WRITING

As with supported reading, a range of activities can be used to support students' writing. Here we will focus on such familiar practices as modelled, shared, guided, collaborative and independent writing.

MODELLED WRITING
In **modelled** writing, use a 'think-aloud' technique to demonstrate the choices you would make when composing a text similar to the one students are writing. This might last for only a brief time, might target only selected strategies, might blend with shared writing (below), and might involve the whole class or a smaller group.

SHARED WRITING/JOINT CONSTRUCTION
While some students will be ready to get on with their own texts at this point, many students will benefit from participating in jointly composing a text similar to the one they are writing. The students come to the activity with some preparation so that they have something to contribute (e.g. notes from previous field-building activities).

The teacher guides the shared writing of the text, soliciting contributions from the students and demonstrating how to shape these into coherent, interesting written text (e.g. developing an overview/skeleton/graphic organizer of the text; focusing on a particular stage or phase of the text; developing a paragraph around a topic sentence; demonstrating how to change their spontaneous oral offerings into more 'written' language; extending their suggestions by asking 'how?', 'why?', 'which one?', etc; sharing poorly written sentences with students and asking for suggestions for improvement; explaining why a

certain choice might be preferable over another; extending students' vocabulary repertoires; asking students to decide whether to use a simple, compound or complex sentence; engaging the reader.)

During a joint construction, the teacher takes a dominant role, leading by shaping the text as it unfolds (*Could we say that in fewer words?*), asking questions to solicit student responses (*What's a more technical term for that?*), making suggestions (*How about we move this sentence to here?*), recasting as necessary (*You mean ...*) and reminding students of the stages, phases, and features of the deconstructed text (*What do we need in the opening stage of the text? Let's build some description into that noun group*). The focus for the joint construction can include choices about whole text, paragraph or sentence structure. Although spelling and punctuation can be attended to as necessary, the emphasis is on the process of composing rather than creating a polished text.

The students are thus given an opportunity to experience what is involved in composing such a text and can incorporate these understandings into their draft.

Differentation of support
- For less proficient students, you could jointly reconstruct the model text together (in students' own words), e.g. using a graphic organizer of the text as a scaffold, or drawing on students' notes from a previous shared reading of the model text, or modifying the model text by omitting 'chunks' for the students to fill in, or leaving key sentence starters as prompts for students. This might be particularly useful for students learning English as an additional language.
- For more proficient students, you might jointly construct the beginning of the text and then ask groups to collaboratively develop other stages/ phases/ episodes/ paragraphs, guided by the overview of the text (see above). Groups/pairs can then share their draft for discussion/feedback by the class or other groups. Group contributions can be compiled to form a class publication.
- For advanced students, model/ jointly construct a text similar to the one the students will be writing, using the same genre but then asking the students to innovate on the model text in their own writing, e.g. by …
  o changing the field slightly (e.g. model an information report on koalas but let the students choose a different marsupial for their text; model an explanation of earthquakes but the let students choose a different natural disaster)
  o or changing the audience for their text (e.g. writing to persuade an unknown authority figure rather than a familiar adult)
  o or writing from a different perspective
  o or changing the characters/setting/ending in a narrative
  In this case, students might need to conduct additional research, make notes, consider the impact of their changes, and so on.

GUIDED WRITING
In guided writing, discuss language choices as you observe students composing their texts. This is an opportunity to provide feedback to groups of students with similar needs on such matters as sentence structure, vocabulary development, cohesion, punctuation and spelling. It is also an opportunity to consolidate understandings about the field or genre.

COLLABORATIVE WRITING

In collaborative writing, design pair/group activities related to reviewing students' drafts, drawing on understandings developed in previous lessons (e.g. discussion of choices in composing sentences; combining simple sentences into compound and complex sentences where appropriate; expanding sentences; pruning sentences; providing students with possible alternatives for sentences and asking them to justify their choice; discussing relationships between images and written text; improving a poorly designed diagram; encouraging peer feedback on engaging the audience; justifying choices made in the revision of their previous drafts.) Throughout the cycle, but particularly at this point, students could be referring to the rubric relating to the successful achievement of the overall task.

E. INDEPENDENT WRITING

At this point, students are in a position to take full control of their own texts. They have

developed their knowledge of the field, they have shaped their text into stages that achieve the purpose, and they have incorporated key language/ multimodal features. They are now at a stage where they can edit the text to flow smoothly, to improve vocabulary choices and to attend to the needs of the reader. If the student is developing a text that involves the same genre as the model text but employs a slightly different field, the student might need to undertake additional research into that field (e.g. researching an explanation of floods where the teacher might have modelled an explanation of drought).

Finally, students can proofread their texts to attend to spelling, punctuation and grammatical accuracy. Provide guidelines for students to revise, edit and proofread their texts. They can also polish up the presentation of the text (e.g. font selection, headings, images, layout).

A key scaffolding strategy for this stage of the curriculum cycle is the provision of explicit criteria to guide the students' work. Such criteria may be jointly constructed, but the important thing is that the criteria reflect the shared language and understandings about the genre and topic that the class has been working on. The criteria provide a useful tool for students to reflect upon their own work as they complete it.

At this stage, students can share their published texts with others, including peers and parents, feeling a sense of achievement as they look back over their saved drafts and observing the progress they have made throughout the cycle.
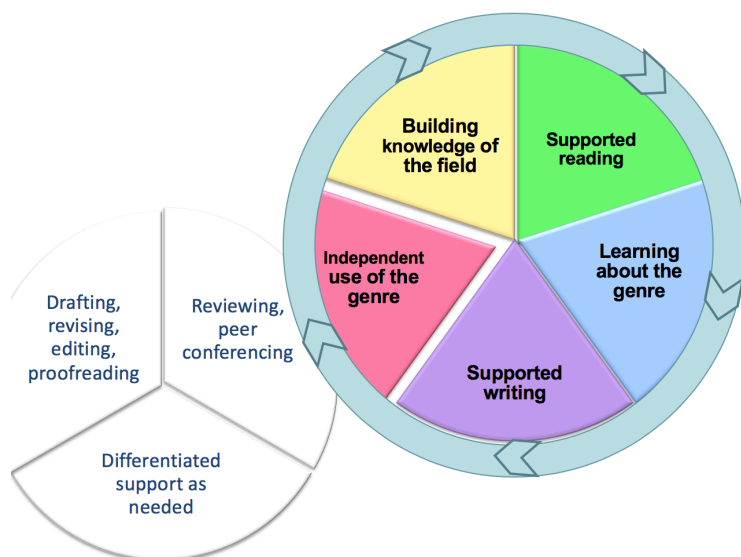
SOME COMMON PURPOSES FOR WRITING IN SCHOOL

		Genre family	Purpose
Storying	Factual stories	Personal recount	Recounting an event in which you participated
		Factual recount	Objectively recounting an incident or event
		Autobiographical recount	Recounting one's own life stages, including empathetic recounts
		Memoir	Reflecting on significant events in one's life
		Biographical recount	Recounting life events, often with an evaluation of the person
		Historical recount	Recounting historical events
		Historical account	Recounting and explaining historical events
	Imaginative stories	Narrative	Resolving a complication in a story
		Literary recount	Recounting an event/ series of events using literary language
		Anecdote	Sharing an emotional, amusing incident
		Drama scripts	Stories for performance
	Verbal art	Poetry	Carefully crafting language for an aesthetic or emotional response
Evaluating	Response	Personal response	Reacting emotionally to a text or work of art
		Review	Providing a summary, analysis and evaluation of a literary or visual text
		Critical analysis	Assessing the merit of a text, artefact, idea or proposal
	Persuasion	Argument	Arguing for a point of view
		Discussion	Weighing two or more points of view
Inquiring	Inquiries	Procedure	Telling how to do something
		Investigation report	Researching a topic using a variety of sources
		Problem-solution report	Devising a solution to a problem
		Design portfolio	Designing and creating a product, service, performance or artwork
		Experiment report	Reporting on the findings of an experiment
Explaining	Explanations	Sequential explanation	Explaining why something happens or how something works in a linear or cyclical sequence
		Causal explanation	Explaining how something works or why something happens
		System explanation	Explaining the components of a system, their functions and how they work together
		Factorial explanation	Explaining the factors that lead to a particular outcome
		Consequential explanation	Explaining the effects of a particular input
Describing	Description	Particular description	Describing a particular person, place or thing
	Information reports	Descriptive report	Describing a general class of things
		Comparative report	Comparing and contrasting two or more things
		Classifying report	Classifying things into 'types of'
		Compositional report	Describing parts of wholes