

TUTOR WEEKLY REFLECTIONS: MODELLED FOR STUDENTS

BUILDING THE FIELD

It is essential to build the field and activate student's prior knowledge before we expect them to write (Derewianka and Jones, 2012). I chose to model a range of different classroom strategies that teachers can use to build the field for narratives. Although I had planned to only initially use the book 'The Coat' as a mentor text, after reading the research by Hammond and Gibbons (2005), I decided that a range of texts would be used. Hammond and Gibbons acknowledge that it is vital that we allow students to acquire knowledge through a wealth of resources and approaches. This approach mirrors a multimodality approach (Bull and Anstey 2010) where students can make meaning from a variety of modes. Thus, it was vital that I modelled, shared and guided the students through a variety of different texts and strategies.

LEARNING ABOUT THE GENRE

I chose to work with the picture story book 'The Coat' because it provided a source for rich language and a powerful narrative. It is the type of narrative that goes across age groups. I believed that it would engage pre-service teachers. The multimodality of the text was intriguing, especially in terms of the pictures in the book which were a blend of black and white and coloured images. The sepia shade of the black and white photos told a story in themselves. According to Lenters and Winters (2013) "Engaging children in multimodal storytelling can set up rich contexts for literacy learning – contexts that allow for creative explorations essential to 21st century learning (p. 228). 'The Coat' offers a rich context for pre-service teachers to engage with the teaching and learning cycle.

SUPPORTED WRITING

The joint construction phase is a critical point in student writing. This stage involves the teacher acting as a scribe while the students contribute to a text or part of a text (Derewianka and Jones, 2012; Humphrey and Macnaught, 2011). Part of this process is to model and then scaffold. There are many aspects to student writing and deciding what to include in the tutorial proved challenging.

The EDF 1205 teaching group have a weekly meeting to discuss the upcoming week's tutorial, consequently I used this opportunity to hash out the possibilities for our tutorial's activities. We were able to collaborate and decide on important aspects in the Teaching and Learning Cycle such as innovation of the original text, joint construction and practice (Derewianka and Jones). We decided to include modelling an innovation of 'The Coat' as a tutorial activity, followed by observing a video from the Education and Training Website on Writing the Paragraph (Education and Training, 2018). Finally, after exploring some examples from 'The Coat' on character, asking students to work on their own character development was a natural segue.

INDEPENDENT WRITING

At this stage in the cycle students are working mostly independently, however it's really important to build their capacity to edit, proof read and apply the skills they have been learning (Holliday, 2011). I wanted to build in some strategies and structures that students can use to reflect on their own work or that students can use to provide peer feedback. Both self-reflection and peer feedback, as well as teacher conferencing, are useful in developing students' understanding of their writing, especially authorial choices (Holliday). The questions were specifically used to encourage students to focus on meaning, rather than more tangible aspects of writing such as spelling and punctuation. Teachers often use feedback from students to help shape their teaching (Hattie and Timperley, 2007). As part of our reflections on the teaching so far, we noticed a number of questions on the difference between the curriculum plan and lesson plan, so we decided to build in some explanations and an activity that responded to these questions. This week also seemed like a good opportunity to survey students as to how they felt they were going; this information will then be used to tweak the teaching plan for the upcoming weeks.

EVALUATING WRITING

When developing this unit of work, we decided to work at a meta-level. Not only were we teaching about the *Teaching and Learning Cycle*, but we were also teaching through the *Teaching and Learning Cycle*.

Rubrics were discussed in terms of how to use them and how they would be used to assess the pre-service teacher's work. Rubrics are one way to assess and analyse children's writing (see Wing Jan, 2015 and Campbell, 2017). As tutors, we encouraged pre-service teachers to think about how they could create their own rubrics which engaged with children's learning needs and were informed by the unit of work being assessed (Scull, 2018).

Attention was given to assessing writing as “a social practice that involves noticing representing and responding to children’s literate behaviours, rendering them meaningful for particular purposes and audiences” (Johnston and Costello, 2005, p. 258). Therefore, activities such as self and peer assessment and role-playing conferencing with young students were incorporated into the workshop. The idea was to enhance pre-service teachers “understanding of themselves as learners” (Scull, 2018, p. 168).

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