

Using the writing framework to strengthen writing at Lakeview School.

About us

We are a decile 2 full primary school in the Wairarapa town of Masterton, with approximately 400 students from years 1 to 8. Our vision is to engage and empower our students so that they achieve excellence in all that they do. We're a vibrant community, with our student population comprising 55% Māori, 36% Pākehā and 9% Pasifika. Here is our story about how we plan to use the writing framework to guide our professional development this year. We'll explain why we've made this decision, how we're planning to use the writing framework to strengthen the way we teach and assess writing, and what we hope the impact will be on our students' ability to use their writing to support their learning throughout the curriculum.

Why we're focusing on students' progress and achievement in writing

We've decided to focus our professional learning in 2019 on writing because, quite simply, it's the area in which we are least confident about assessing our students' progress and achievement. Ironically, we currently do too much assessment in writing. The school has spent a lot of time developing its own writing matrices, but these have not been used consistently, while at the same time they've created an extra workload for teachers. Therefore, the leadership team has been looking for a more robust tool that is both efficient and effective.

"We want to reach real certainty about what the teachers should be assessing; a real awareness of what students should be doing at each level."

Writing will be our main PLD focus for the year. We've got 100 hours to do this, so it's important that the way we spend that time makes a

difference to our students' learning. We want to do something slowly and well. And the first step is to get a really good understanding of what progress and achievement in writing looks like.

Why we're going to use the writing framework

Our school's initial attempts to use the Progress and Consistency Tool (PaCT) were not particularly successful, with many teachers claiming that using PaCT was too much work. So last year the leadership team went to some regional workshops to see how other schools were using the tool. We listened to schools who were enthusiastic about how PaCT had transformed the way they assessed and tracked student progress in reading, writing and mathematics. We realised that PaCT could be used efficiently to help us make consistent judgments about students' writing and enable us to track each student's progress from year 1 to year 8. But we also realised that the writing framework which sits behind PaCT would be useful in helping us to deepen our understanding about what to look for when considering students' progress.

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So we've decided to put the tool itself aside and focus on the Learning Progression Frameworks (LPFs). We will re-introduce PaCT when we've got a much better understanding of all aspects of writing

and how each aspect develops. We've had a look at the writing framework on the new Ministry of Education website, and we really like the clarity the tasks and annotations in the illustrations provide. It's great being able to think about the curriculum in this way, and we're enthusiastic about the potential the writing framework has for giving us a much deeper understanding of what to look for when our students are writing at all levels of the school.

How will we approach our PLD?

The writing framework provides a really good structure for our PLD. The work we do in writing – how we explore the aspects in the framework and use this understanding to think about our teaching and learning programmes – should set us up for similar work in reading and mathematics. We've engaged a literacy facilitator who is very familiar with writing in New Zealand schools, and we're confident that she can support us to understand the key features in all seven progressions in the writing framework. We will be asking her to keep the writing framework central to what we do.

There is a risk that we could move on too quickly to the teaching of writing before the teachers have a deep understanding of all the aspects of writing that students need to develop. The teachers need to have plenty of time to explore each of the illustrations so that they become well-informed about the writing-related knowledge and skills students need and what these look like at each stage as our students make their way through the school. The teachers also need to think about the opportunities students should have in their classrooms in order to develop all aspects of writing in different areas of the curriculum. It's quite simple: you can't notice how well a student can do something if they're not given the chance to show you.

"I want all teachers to have a greater awareness of what students should be learning and achieving at each year level."

What will success look like?

We'll know we've been successful when all teachers can look at a piece of writing – either a text a student has written or the process of writing

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they've used – and have a strong awareness of where the student sits in terms of their learning. This awareness will help teachers to be confident about where their students need to go next in order to become stronger writers, regardless of where they are on the learning continuum.

We're convinced that familiarity with the writing framework will give teachers a deep understanding of writing, and that this will help them to evaluate how well their current teaching practice is supporting their students to develop their writing expertise. Because our overall aim is to simplify what we're doing at Lakeview School, we want all our teachers to be able to do this confidently and in the most straightforward way possible.