



HAMPDEN STREET SCHOOL
Established 1868

Writing

focus
'Deeper Features'



**End of Year Report
November 2011**

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Students will be motivated and engaged in writing across a wide range of genre.

Introduction

Over the past 2 years trends in writing were noted and showed that there were some gaps in writing for students. Some of these were specifically in *deeper features* of writing, and also in the interest and engagement of students in writing. While this is a national trend also we felt that we could do better with our students in this area.

The implementation of National Standards last year also highlighted this aspect for us, as it related to writing not just in a writing lesson but across all learning areas of the curriculum. Teachers had also expressed their concerns at different times throughout the year.

We decided that we needed to refocus on writing, particularly in engaging students and ensuring that they were motivated to write and also had the skills and knowledge needed to be a good writer. This is a critical area as writing is still a major form of communication in one way or another and is a part of the Key Competency -*Using Symbols & Texts* –in the NZC.

Reviewing our writing programme also needed to happen this year, particularly looking at the integration and aligning of different learning areas and achievement objectives (changes in curriculum and pedagogy). Looking at these we decided that we needed to ensure that we were using relevant and engaging contexts which linked to other learning areas naturally and in authentic and real life situations. It was also observed that some teachers were not entirely confident in their own written language skills and therefore not as confident teaching these either. As we have had a reasonable turnover of staff since the last in-depth literacy professional development we have done as a staff this was an ideal opportunity for us to address this area.



We were lucky to gain a literacy contract with the University of Canterbury and have a year of in-depth professional development for teachers across the school. This was ably led by Di Skilton who worked alongside our staff in up-skilling in literacy (writing), and providing models of best practice. She also worked in classrooms with teachers and ensured that our senior staff were able to follow her model so that we could sustain and build on the progress made this year.

Project Outcomes

Also see

- *Action Plan*
- *Di Skilton's data*
- *Written Language Reports- March / November*

Key actions and a summary of the outcomes:

- ***Professional Development in Written Language for staff***

The Literacy Contract we had over this year has been a very successful model for teachers to gain valuable professional development in writing. This contract enabled us to have a Literacy Advisor working in the school on a regular basis throughout Terms 1-3. She worked in classes alongside teachers, as well as running a series of staff meetings.

Teachers were up-skilled in written language personally and this was transferred into their written language programmes and practice. Best practice models for differentiated teaching and learning as well as flexi-grouping allowed teachers to improve and modify their programmes to meet the learning needs of their students.

Making use of high quality resources and understanding how to maximize these to the best advantage was very helpful for improving written language in the school. Our school assessment and planning templates were looked at and a different model trialed with a teacher. This has been very successful in a small group and is currently being trialed in a normal classroom to see what adaptations need to be made.

Staff were very positive and enthusiastic about writing also with this model for professional development working particularly well in our school.

The emphasis on moderating across the school also gave opportunities for teachers to become familiar with Levels 1-3, what they looked like and the criteria at each level. Time was allocated in staff meetings so that this could be done thoroughly.

- **Students are motivated and engaged in writing**

Student achievement data shows a huge improvement in attitude, engagement and interest in writing over this year. Teacher observation also supports this with teachers commenting on how much more enthusiastic students are. Overall writing across learning areas has improved also. Students are more confident in their writing abilities and have a much better knowledge and skill base. Student 'voice' has become stronger and students see writing as more purposeful, relevant and authentic.

- **Ensure writing learning outcomes and criteria are specific and explicitly taught**

Teachers worked with students on explicit writing skills. This improved over the year and teachers became more confident in what they were doing. Learning intentions became more specific and success criteria were set, however this was not always consistent across the school.

A new writing template is being developed and trialed as it allows for much better planning for the different components of a written language lesson. This will ensure planning and teaching remains specific and explicit. It will also make it easier for teachers to be effective.



- **Explicit teaching of writing will be a focus area for teacher appraisals in 2011**

All teachers were required to have a component of their 2011 goals based around writing depending on what their needs were in this area. This has worked well as teachers had different needs and were able to meet them through this process. Teachers were able to observe others and models of best practice through the literacy advisor.

Professional conversations were held by staff throughout the year both formally and informally. These grew in depth and understanding and have been very valuable.

Conclusion

This has been a very useful and valuable project school-wide, benefitting teachers and students. All teachers were positive and enthusiastic about the learning and professional development opportunity which had been provided. Student achievement data across the school showed substantial gains in learning for students at all levels. One of the effects of this project was that teachers made sure that writing was given a priority in the classroom programme. The emphasis was on ensuring daily writing happened and that students were actually writing. Moderating across year groups and vertically across the school also gave teachers the opportunity to see where students were actually at, having professional learning discussions based on writing and the criteria at each level.



Where to Next

- Roll out and trial the revised writing plan template
- Continue to become familiar with the moderation process for writing and do this with other schools also
- Professional development needs to continue with regular (once a term) updates, discussions and best practice learning so teachers remain up-skilled
- Ensure learning intentions and success criteria begin to be co-constructed by teachers and students
- Regular quality feedback and feed forward
- Sustained use of differentiated teaching and flexi-grouping models

