



Leading Literacy

CPD for excellence in English

Success In Reading and Writing: Planning for Success in Non-Fiction Writing

Key points to take away:

The planning process represented by our Y-shaped diagram is an effective way of organising familiar elements of English sequences, and ensuring that no elements of composition are left out!

There is flexibility in the time you might spend over any of the elements:

immersion will take different amounts of time depending on the text (and the class);

generating and organising new content could happen either during or following studies in other subjects, e.g. history, geography, science, DT and art. They may benefit from a longer process, but can also be completed quickly;

the collaborative composition phase is dependent on the length of the text being written: a class is unlikely to spend more than 2-3 lessons writing instructions, but a five section / paragraph report would potentially take five lessons.

The independent application phase, again, will take as long as you allow.

Shared planning enables children to focus on the new skills of vocabulary, grammar and punctuation that you wish to see in their writing. If they can do it, this suggests they are already familiar with the VGP skills – and perhaps need a new level of challenge.

Shared writing is crucial to the process, and if you lack confidence in this, practise. Attempting to apply the selected VGP skill to each section is the most useful form of planning we know. See our Tips for Success in Shared Writing course for more help in this area.

After shared writing, allow children to write to the same content in their own words, so that they will only be challenged by the VGP skills requirement. If we ask them to apply the VGP skills to different content, we are asking them to do two very challenging things at once.

The independent application phase allows you to see which of the taught skills children are able to apply, by themselves, to different content.



Questions for you and your team

Which of the elements of the Y-planning process are you currently secure on, and which may need strengthening in some cases?

When children in your class find it difficult to write, what is the main stumbling block preventing them from succeeding?

How might differentiation be applied to the shared plan, and to collaborative composition? Think about *access* for those struggling with writing, and *deepening* for those already able to do what you wish to teach the rest of your class.

Putting it into practice

Think about the learning that is happening across (and maybe beyond) your curriculum, and make matches with different purposes of writing, e.g. information report, instruction, recount (including news stories and biographies), etc.

Source high-quality, age-appropriate models of the text types to be taught. Remember that the subject matter does not have to match your topic; it just has to be a good model of the language and form required.

Think about the language foci (vocabulary, grammar, punctuation) that:

- a) your class needs to develop, and*
- b) will work well with a given purpose (e.g. dialogue punctuation is not very helpful when teaching instructions, whilst adverbs will often be very useful!)*

Choose an area of study from a different subject and link this to a text form, e.g. the Roman Army and information report; creating an electrical circuit and instructions; how a river forms and explanation.

Practise applying the selected VGP foci to the selected form, in readiness for shared writing.

Plan for an 'independent application' phase. Remember that the class will need further content learning (e.g. while you are in the collaborative composition mode, writing instructions on Egyptian mummification in English lessons, they could be learning about pyramid building in history lessons in readiness for independent writing of instructions on this subject).