What is Process Writing?

June 4, 2018

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Process Writing is an approach to teaching writing that allows the teacher and the students to go through the process of producing a text together. In process writing, students have the chance to think about what they are going to write, produce drafts, revise, edit, and give and receive feedback on their work before coming up with the final version of the text. A process approach to writing contrasts with a product approach, where the main idea is to reproduce a model text.

Stages of process writing:
The creative process of writing a text is the focus of process writing. Writing is a "productive" skill and the stages of a writing lesson differ from that of receptive skills, like reading. A typical process writing lesson usually includes the following phases:

Pre-writing
 In this stage, learners are asked to come up with ideas and plan what they are going to write. This stage might include:

- Brainstorming ideas
- Planning
- Organizing
- Selecting ideas

Learners can - and should - work collaboratively during this stage. They can use techniques such as creating lists, mind maps and charts in order to brainstorm and select the ideas they'd like to include in their texts. This can be done in or outside the classroom. Using ed tech tools such as Padlet and Edmodo might

enable the teacher to set collaborative work while students are at home.

Writing

In this stage, learners compose the first draft of their texts. As students will be given the chance to revise and edit their texts later, accuracy of language, punctuation and vocabulary is not essential at this point. Composing the text can be done individually or collaboratively - learners can be given the chance to choose, according to their preference.
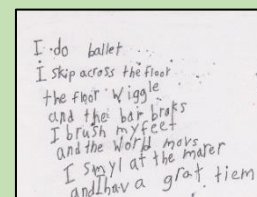
Revising

This is when learners have the opportunity to look back at their texts and reorganize ideas, add, change or remove sentences and adapt their choice of words to make sure the ideas are being conveyed clearly. Feedback has an essential role in this stage. It can be provided by the teacher or by peers: learners can exchange drafts and comment on each other's work.

Tell children the first step is to just get their thoughts on paper. If it's hard for them, you become their scribe. They talk and you write. If they do not have trouble at this level, make sure they know the focus here is on their ideas. They do not have to worry about spelling, punctuation or grammar. They will have time to go back and work on

Your role is to read their drafts carefully and address ONLY the content. Do not correct for spelling, punctuation or grammar. **Show your student you are interested in what they wrote.** Laugh at things that are funny and make positive comments when you spot anything interesting or well worded. "What a great word to use to describe that wolf! He "lurked" behind a tree. I can just see him "lurking.""

NOTES ON SPELLING

Some of the children in grades three and up will desperately want you to tell them how to spell words. If this is the case – go ahead and spell! Don't turn these guidelines into rigid rules. You should always be flexible and arrive at what works best for your tutee. It is fine to keep telling them that they will have time to go back and think about spelling later – but if it is challenging for them to do this, do not let it become an issue.

Children going into grades 1 or 2 should use "invented" or "temporary" spelling. This is important because listening carefully to the sounds within words also helps them learn to read. Again, don't let these guidelines lead to a struggle, but do your best not to spell every word for your younger tutees.

After revising, students write another draft. That means they go back to the "writing" stage. This essential part of process writing allows learners to write different drafts as they focus on the process, rather than on the final result.

Editing

After writing several drafts, it is time to proofread, check grammar, spelling and punctuation. Again, encouraging peer help and getting students to read each other's work might be useful.

There is likely a great deal to improve. Don't try to fix it all. *Pick one or two content related points.* "The way you describe the youngest cat is so vivid! I can almost see all the crazy colors of her fur. I'd love to know more about what she looks like as she waits for mice to come out from under the stove. Let's think of ways to describe it for your next draft."

Don't forget to ask your child to read their own writing. Ask them if there is anything they want to add, take out or change.

Editing and Age Differences:

If your tutee is going into grade 4 and up, make sure they read and edit their work before you do. Make sure they check for spelling, punctuation and simple grammar. There is no need for them to find every mistake. When you type up their writing, type exactly what they leave in their final draft EXCEPT the remaining spelling errors. Correct those.

For younger children, use a very "light touch" with editing. Give them one thing to look for at a time. First, have them read over their drafts to see if they notice any words they would like to change to "dictionary spelling." Have them check to make sure the first word of every sentence is capitalized and that every sentence ends with some kind of punctuation. (Feel free to introduce them to question marks, quotation marks and exclamation marks.)

Some considerations when adopting a process approach to writing:

It fosters creativity:

Unlike product writing, process writing does not have a model text as the starting point. That means that learners have the chance to use their previous knowledge and start thinking about a text based on the ideas that they come up with. When planning to use a process approach to writing, however, it is important to think about what type of text - or textual genre - the students will be asked to produce. If learners need to write a narrative, an article or an essay, focusing on ideas first might be a good choice. However, if the genre conventions are very fixed, like in e-mails, formal letters, or reports, a product approach to writing might be more suitable.

It encourages collaborative work:

Most stages of process writing allow for group work and peer collaboration. Learners can work together while they generate and select ideas - they might end up many more ideas in the pre-writing phase if this is done collaboratively.

Feedback is of paramount importance when writing is seen as a process. As learners can (and should!) write multiple drafts when this approach is adopted, feedback is present throughout. Instead of being provided by the teacher only, there is room for peer feedback and peer correction. For peer feedback to be effective, however, the teacher must provide the tools for learners to give feedback to each other. Some ideas might involve asking students to focus on one aspect of the text at a time (e.g.: giving feedback on content first, then helping each other revise the organization of the text, etc.)

One of the greatest advantages of teaching learners to collaborate with each other when writing is that it resembles how writing takes place in most real-life situations: when we write texts, before submitting it to the final reader, we

usually ask somebody to read and give us feedback. Why not trying this in the classroom as well?

Time constraints

Writing takes time - and this is even more true with process writing. In order to enable learners to focus on the process, it is important to give them time to go through the stages, write multiple drafts, and incorporate the feedback they receive on their work. Students will spend a lot of time *not writing*, so it is important to help them keep their final objective in mind during the process.

It requires support

As mentioned previously, feedback is key for a successful process writing lesson. In addition to that, staging the lesson coherently and providing the necessary amount of support in each phase may help learners reach their objectives more efficiently. For example, if learners are asked to proofread, it would be a good idea to give them tools that will enable them to proofread effectively.

References:
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