

Effective Teaching of Writing

Shaun Hawthorne & Rebecca Jesson
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contact by email - shawthorne@mrgs.school.nz
r.jesson@auckland.ac.nz

Presentation Outline

A few facts about writing achievement in NZ

Key principles & practices for teaching writing

Reading and writing links

Analyse models & formulate success criteria

Feedback approaches

Facts about writing in NZ

NEMP Statistics 2002 & 2006:

- *Yr 8 students – writing ranked 10th out of 12 school tasks
- *Girls score better than boys on over 85% of tasks.
- *Boys less positive than girls in attitudes towards writing.
- *Attitude declines with age.
- *Maori and PI students score less well on 39% of tasks

In Focus Statistics 2006:

- *Many secondary age students are not improving beyond curriculum level 3 in writing.

FIGURE 1. Distribution of writing total scores.

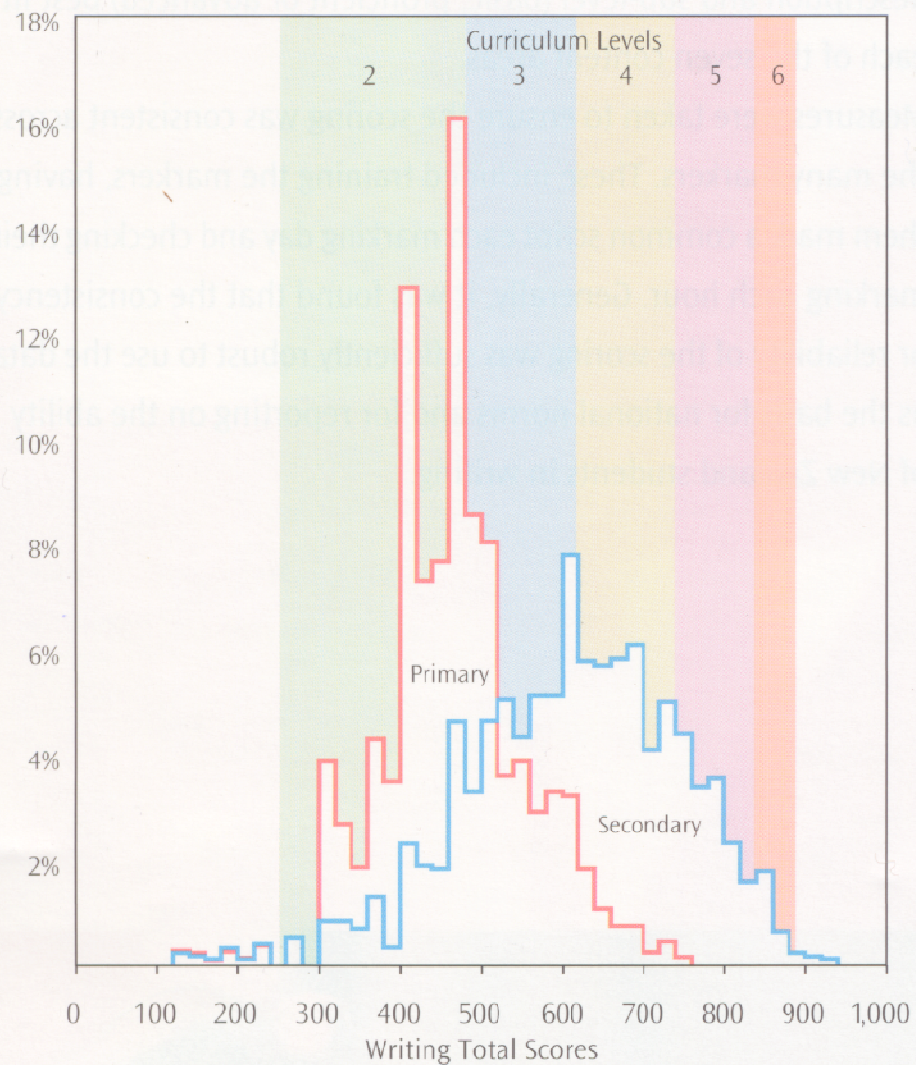


FIGURE 2. Writing score and curriculum level by year.

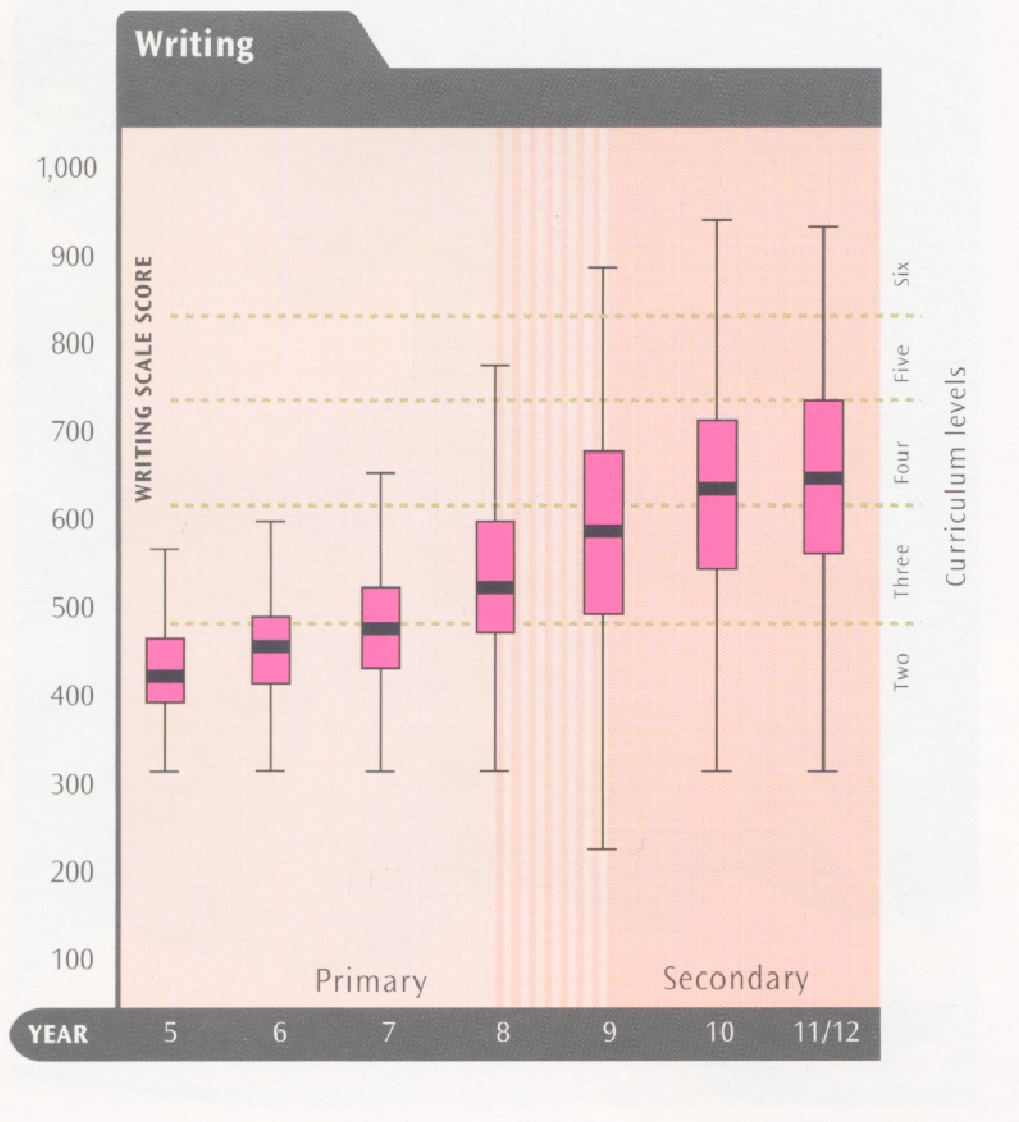


FIGURE 6. Average writing score and curriculum level by ethnicity and year.

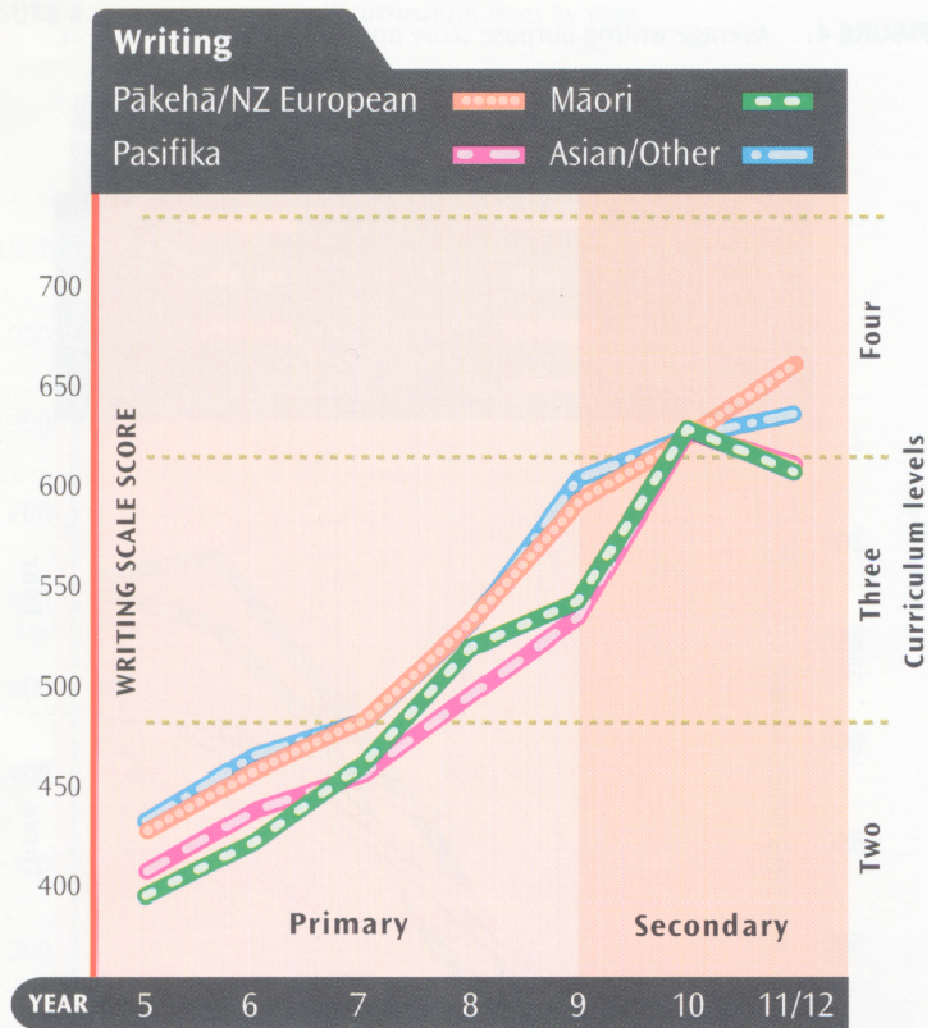
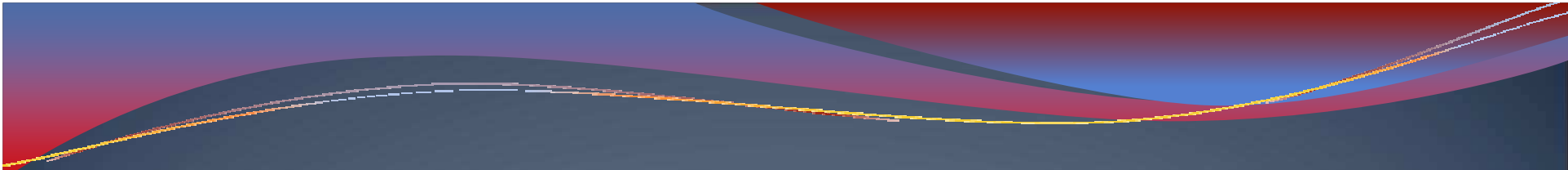


FIGURE 5. Average writing score and curriculum level by gender and year.





What types of writing are
students most involved with in
Secondary School?

Effectiveness? ... Prevalence?

1 Rate what sorts of tasks you think are most effective.

2 Rate what sorts of tasks you think are most prevalent in classrooms.

	Effectiveness? (1-10)	Prevalence? (1-10)
Short Answer Responses to Questions		
Brief Responses to Material Read		
Completing Worksheets		
Brief Summaries of Material Read		
Lists		
Copying Text		
Writing Instructions		
"5- Paragraph" Essays		
Research Papers		
Short Stories		
Autobiographies		

From: “Teaching Writing to High School Students: A National Survey” (Kiuvara et al, 2009)

Most Common Writing Tasks (Aves Across Eng, Science & Soc Studies)
 Those involving relatively low levels of analysis and interpretation and not much writing e.g.

	Daily	2-4 x Wk	Wkly	Mnthly	Qrtly	½ Yrly
Short Answer Responses to Questions	6%	37%	39%	13%	2%	1%
Brief Responses to Material Read	7%	27%	36%	19%	4%	1%
Completing Worksheets	5%	28%	39%	16%	5%	1%
Brief Summaries of Material Read	5%	19%	28%	26%	9%	3%
Lists	2%	13%	23%	18%	7%	3%
Copying Text	3%	10%	13%	9%	4%	4%
Writing Instructions	4%	8%	14%	12%	9%	9%

From: “Teaching Writing to High School Students: A National Survey” (Kiuvara et al, 2009)

Least Common Writing Tasks

(Avg Across Eng, Science & Soc Studies)

Those involving relatively high levels of analysis and interpretation and multi-paragraph in length e.g.

	Wkly	Mnthly	Qrtly	½ Yrly	Yrly	Never
“5- Paragraph” Essays	8%	21%	18%	15%	7%	27%
Research Papers	0%	3%	12%	32%	37%	17%
Short Stories	3%	5%	8%	13%	14%	55%
Auto/ Biographies	0%	0%	5%	12%	25%	58%

Differences between subjects

English:

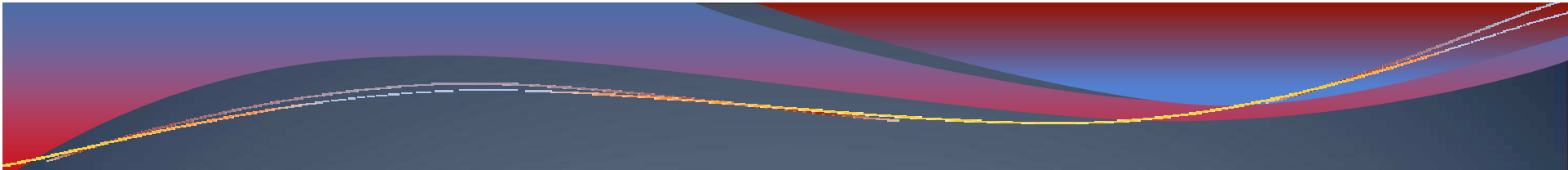
- More likely than either Science or Social Studies teachers to involve students in personal journals, narratives, short stories, poems, book reports, letters, autobiographies, play scripts
- Approx 92% would involve students in a multi-paragraph task at least quarterly, 67% would do so monthly and 29% weekly.

Science:

- More likely than either English or Social Studies teachers to involve students in worksheets and instruction writing (e.g. lab reports)
- Approx 42% would involve students in a multi-paragraph task at least quarterly, 23% would do so monthly and 8% weekly.

Social Studies:

- Similar to English teachers in the assignment of types of writing task
- Approx 80% would involve students in a multi-paragraph task at least quarterly, 70% would do so monthly and 23% weekly.



Key Principles in teaching writing

We believe that some key principles that underpin effective teaching of writing are:

That writing is an essential skill that students need if they are to participate meaningfully and successfully in the modern world

That what teachers do makes a difference to how well students learn to write

That all students are able to improve their writing

That students learn best in a supportive and nurturing environment

That students' own interests, backgrounds and goals are important to acknowledge and include in writing programmes

That effective writing is linked to effective reading

Four types of knowledge writers need to write well

'Genre' knowledge

- this involves developing student knowledge and understanding of the key text types and forms that they will encounter in their lives and schooling and that they need to be able to reproduce to succeed in the 21st century.

Strategic knowledge

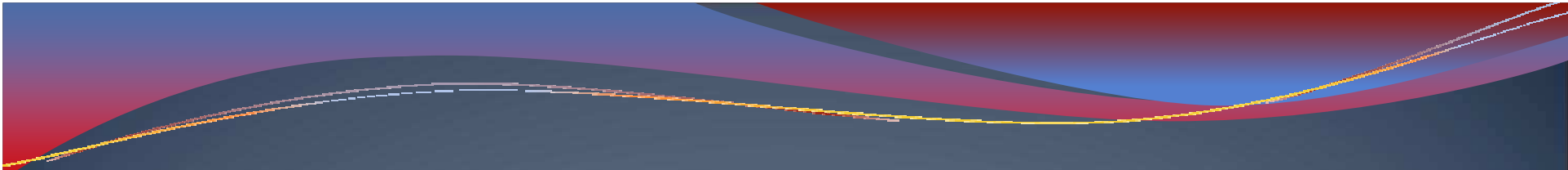
- this involves developing student knowledge of and skill in using strategies that help them to effectively manage the many different demands of the writing process.

Linguistic knowledge

- this involves developing student knowledge of and skill in using increasingly sophisticated and complex vocabulary, language resources, literary devices, sentence constructions and grammatical control.

Content knowledge

- this involves developing student knowledge of the subjects and topics that they are required to write about.



Seven Effective Instructional Practices

Instruction that clearly describes the learning intentions and *success criteria* for each writing task.

Instruction that encourages students to *collaborate* with peers to analyse models of writing **and** to produce writing.

Instruction that allows for individual, *goal-directed work and inquiry*.

Instruction that makes *connections* across and between: texts, text types, content and students' own lives.

Instruction that emphasises that *writing is a process* – i.e. requires students to work through the planning, drafting and revising stages of writing.

Instruction that involves students in learning *strategies* that help them with producing writing and on managing the many processes involved in writing.

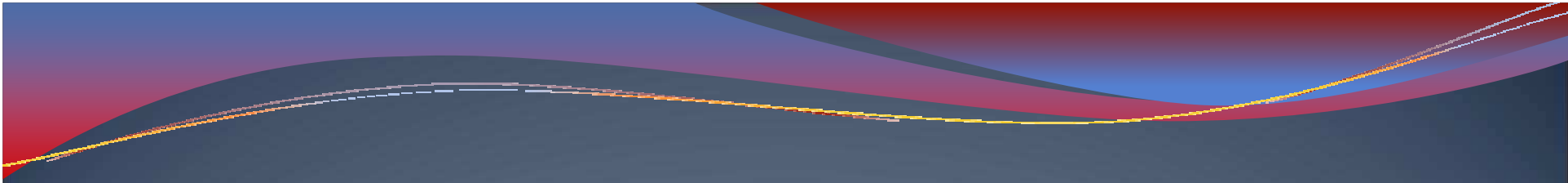
Feedback that is specific and mainly focused on the particular writing task and strategies/ procedures that students are learning.



Talking point:

These seven effective instructional practices for writing create a burden for teachers additional to the SLP guidelines

(i.e., to what extent does this list of practices for writing fit/ not fit with the SLP guidelines?)



One approach to rethinking
writing instruction:

Reading and Writing Links
aka “Intertextuality”

Supporting genre and linguistic knowledge using “Intertextuality”

Texts are interrelated

Connections are made across texts

Intertextual connections can enter via the author or via the reader (or both)

Intertextual connections as ‘borrowing’ – importance of supporting students to ‘borrow’ appropriately

Authors draw from other texts in order to write

Harry Potter by JK Rowling

- Charles Dickens – orphaned protagonist, as well as invented language (muggles) and word play (Diagon Alley)

Roald Dahl – Victorian characterisation of abusive family and devilish humour

JRR Tolkien and CS Lewis – parallel universe

All of these writers draw for folklore and mythology

(Saltman 2002)

Learners draw from known texts to comprehend

Lenny Do I have to read this?

Pauline Do you want to read it?

Lenny [Nods and reads]

 mother...father...brother...sister...I don't know
 this one [pointing to 'nephew']

Pauline Nephew

Lenny Duckville

Pauline No, it says 'nephew'

(Harris & Trezise 1999)

Typical writing pedagogy

Either:

- Teachers start a lesson with a **brainstorm**
- Students given message that writing is **'inventing'**
- Students expected to **'come up'** with their own
- Students expected to **infer** what successful writing looks like...

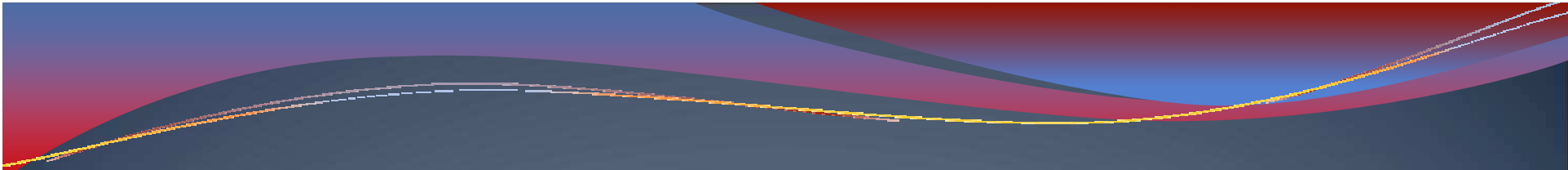
Or:

- Teachers start with a **'model'** or frame
- Children given the message that writing is **'following a recipe'** or completing a worksheet
- Successful writing is matching the **'model'**

Implications for teachers

Texts are woven from other sources

- Students use prior knowledge of texts to write and comprehend
- Each student's 'intertextual history' is unique (and different from yours)
- Each class builds a joint 'intertextual history' based on what they have done together
- Students need to use (their own) reading as a basis for their (their own) writing
- Teachers support students to use their reading as a resource for writing. (Need to make links for students between reading and writing)



Analysing Texts & Formulating Success Criteria

Critical reading of a text:

Talking point:

The following text is successful/ unsuccessful in achieving its purpose.

Read “Didymo aka rock snot” closely.

Highlight/ annotate the ways the author achieves her purpose, considering such things as:

- Words and language selected
- Paragraphs, order and organisation
- Content included

(With students, teachers can use this activity to co-construct success criteria, and then, using students’ own texts as formative assessment)



Didymo aka rock snot

The alga didymo (*Didymosphenia geminata*) has been causing problems in the South Island. Didymo is part of the algal family of single-celled aquatic plants known as diatoms. Their cell walls contain silica, and the blooms are silky to touch, although they look slimy – didymo feels like wet cotton wool. Like other algae it is invisible to the naked eye until it blooms to form dense colonies.

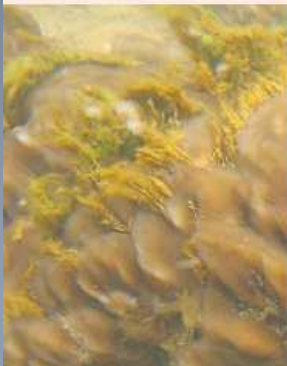
Didymo contains chlorophyll which enables it to make its own food by using energy from the sun. However, it also contains other pigments which give it a range of colours from beige or brown to white.

The population grows mainly by asexual cell division, with occasional sexual reproduction to exchange genetic material and restore cell size. When the alga blooms, its cells ooze mucilage that attaches the didymo to underwater surfaces. Young colonies look like small dimples on the surfaces of river rocks, but as the bloom progresses the dimples grow to form stalks and then impenetrable mats with thick strands which can cover any underwater surface, including other plants, rocks and debris. It attaches itself firmly and does not fall apart when rubbed between your fingers.

Didymo prefers cool to warm water with a neutral or slightly alkaline pH, in moderately flowing rivers with a firm, stable river bed exposed to plenty of sunshine. It was first found in the lower Waiau and Mararoa Rivers in Southland in October 2004, although it was possibly living undetected in some South Island rivers before then. In 2005, didymo was found in the upper reaches of the Buller River, and various rivers in Otago and Southland. In January 2006, NIWA confirmed it was growing in Canterbury's Waitaki River where it now poses a threat to hydropower generation.

Although didymo is not considered to be a direct threat to human health, it does come with a substantial range of other problems. It can:

- clog hydropower dams and water supplies for irrigation
- become entangled in boat propellers
- make rocks slippery and therefore dangerous for swimmers and wading anglers
- reduce populations of fish (trout, salmon, whitebait, bullies and eels) because the blooms smother streambeds, affecting the habitat of insects such as mayflies and caddis flies that fish rely on for food
- alter the pH of the water
- reduce dissolved oxygen
- taint the taste of the water
- create an offensive smell when blooms die off.



We don't know how didymo first came to New Zealand, but it was probably unintentionally transported on recreational or industrial equipment from overseas. Didymo originally comes from cool temperate regions of the Northern Hemisphere. New Zealand's infestation is the first time it has been found in the Southern Hemisphere.

Biosecurity New Zealand has issued a 'controlled area notice' over the South Island to try and prevent didymo from spreading further, especially to the North Island. This means that people using the waterways must obey certain rules, such as checking, cleaning, and drying their gear before leaving a waterway. Failure to do this could result in penalties of up to five years in prison and/or a fine of up to \$100,000.

Didymo, Waitaki River.
PHOTO: JOHN CLAYTON, NIWA

Rescuing The Temples At Abu Simbel

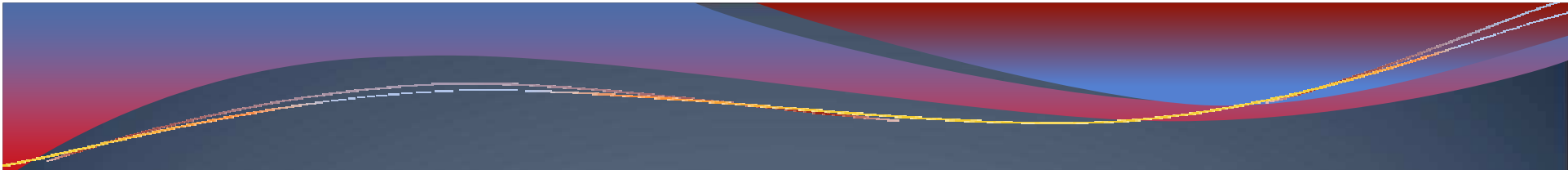
In the twentieth century the population in Egypt has expanded rapidly, so dams had to be made on the River Nile to cope with the growing demand for water and electricity. The Aswan High Dam (actually called Suddel Ali) was constructed between Cairo and Abu Simbel but it dramatically increased flood danger potential. The temples at Abu Simbel were going to be flooded.

Between 1960 and 1970 the operation began. The United Nations Educational and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) helped in providing scientists, architects and basic manpower and machinery to aid in saving the monuments. It was decided to move them.

A survey from ground and air was conducted over the temples and surrounding terrain. The relics inside the temples were removed and their positions marked. An entire map of the inside and outside created for each temple.

The cliff rock above the temple had to be removed so bulldozers were employed. Scaffolding was put in the inner rooms to prevent parts of the temple from collapsing. They then covered and filled each temple with sand for protection. Saws fitted with special teeth designed to keep them from wearing down were found the most ideal tool for cutting the temples up. They were cut into blocks weighing up to 30 tons, then transported to their new home.

Finally, the process was reversed and the temples were re-erected. Concrete domes were created over each temple to make them seem to still be in a cliff setting. The temples had been saved.



Giving Writing Feedback to Students

Outline of Feedback Steps

(from Jennifer Glen's process)

- Teacher gives specific feedback linked to success criteria and student goals for writing task
- Student interprets teacher feedback into own words
- Student records how they feel about the feedback
- Student makes a small number of new goals for next attempt at (same kind of) writing
- Teacher checks student interpretation of feedback, feelings and goals
- Record of the feedback is kept

How to respond to student work



Respond as a reader – not as a ‘proof’ reader



Be specific in your feedback – clearly stating the strengths and areas to improve on next time



Link the response back to strategy use



Link the response back to the student’s / composition’s goals



Emphasize the ‘cognitive and metacognitive’ aspects of writing



Emphasize that through effort, persistence, strategy use and knowledge development that the student can improve their work

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Supporting the writing process

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Supplementary

What does the research literature say are the most effective ways of teaching writing?

From: “Effective Ways of Teaching Complex Expression in Writing” (Myhill et al, 2008)

“*Rhetorical*” approaches - where grammar is explored as the tool by which writing can be shaped for particular effects

Instruction in *writing strategies* and development of metacognition during writing

The *study of models* to development awareness of linguistic and structural features of ‘genre’ of writing

Collaborative writing approaches, especially the talk associated with collaborative writing

Instruction fostering student understanding of the *writing process*

From: “Beating the Odds: Teaching Middle and High School Students to Read and Write Well” (Langer, 2001).

- Skills and knowledge taught in *multiple* types of lessons.
- Curriculum objectives integrated into programmes that were often thematic and recursive in approach.
- Overt connections made across content and structure to curriculum objectives, strategies, students’ lives etc.
- Strategies for *thinking and doing* were explicitly taught, practised and emphasised continually.
- Generative knowledge was encouraged.
- Collaborative approaches to teaching were widespread.

From: “Writing Next”: Meta-analysis of effective strategies for improving writing (Graham & Perin, 2007)

Writing Strategies	ES .82
Summarisation Skills	ES .82
Collaborative Writing	ES .75
Specific Product Goals	ES .70
Word Processing	ES .55
Sentence-Combining	ES .50
Prewriting	ES .32
Inquiry Activities	ES .32
Process Writing Approach	ES .32
Study of Models	ES .25
Writing for Content Learning	ES .23

From: “Writing: Teachers and Children at Work” 20th Anniversary Edition (Graves, 2003)

Children need to choose *most* of their own topics.

Children need regular response to their writing from both the teacher and other readers.

Children need to write a minimum of three days out of five.

Children need to ‘publish’, whether by sharing, collecting, or posting their work.

Children need to hear their teacher talk through what she is doing as she writes on the overhead or the whiteboard.

Children need to maintain collections of their work to establish a writing history.

From: Bennet Woods Elementary School study (Pressley et al, 2007)

Do lots of writing

Reading and writing interlinked

Explicit teaching of skills needed for writing

Varied writing tasks often linked to other content areas

Student choice of topic a feature

Inquiry focused writing tasks a feature

Explicit preparation for state writing tests/tasks

Clear progression of writing demands as students went up grade levels

Writing portfolios