



+ **Covenant Christian School**
 Our Literary Coaching Experience - 2016

Who?

Why?

What?

Who?

Covenant Christian School is a P-10 school in Tuggeranong, A.C.T. We often attract students who have struggled in other environments because we have a small community feel.

Why LNCA writing?

We want to see growth in our students’ ability to find their own writing voice and to be able to express themselves in meaningful and intentional ways. Developing writing as a life skill and desiring that students improve in “low stakes” as well as “high stakes” writing is our focus.

What do we hope this will achieve?

The School is committed to improved writing across the curriculum. We are seeking to be intentional about this and to encourage teachers be more targeted and meaningful in the writing tasks they undertake.

We are making progress in English and Humanities classes and we hope to look more at Science writing next year.

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Identify

and

Target



The diagram shows a central circle with '6+1 Writing Traits' in the middle. Six colored boxes are arranged around the circle, connected by arrows in a clockwise direction: Ideas (red), Organization (green), Voice (purple), Word Choice (red), Sentence Fluency (orange), and Presentation (pink).

Stage
One



Writer's Workshop

At our English team meeting in January, we discussed areas of emphasis for this year. Sarah, who was my coach colleague last year, **identified** 6+1 traits writing as a focus for her. She has spent time re-working essay and writing rubrics to not only include AC descriptors, but also the language around 6+1 traits. We have posters up in the classrooms to remind students in early writing stages to be thinking about their ideas and their writing voice BEFORE organisation, conventions and word choice.

I identified two things – Firstly, to use Writer’s Workshop with Year 6 in conjunction with my colleague, Wendy. Secondly, to inspire deeper learning in my other classes based on the Kathleen Kryza conference.

**Stage
Two**

+ Initiating and Implementing
E-write
Student work and class experiences

In consultation with my Leader and also our English team, we decided on two processes to aid us in data collection: ACER e-write and student work samples.

Some of the features we like about e-write are:

This test is delivered on-line.

Students have half an hour on a single writing task and there are many levels. You can set a task for individual students that is appropriate for their ability regardless of their notional grade.

The writing is then analysed and feedback given almost immediately.

We have instituted this from Years 5-8 in 2015 and implemented it again this year for students in Years 6 -9. In many cases, student levels remained the same from last year to this year. Some actually made significant progress and improved upon last year's score. However, the scaling score is not telling the whole story. When I looked at the data more closely, I realised students were actually attempting to write more sentences and paragraphs in the time allotted.

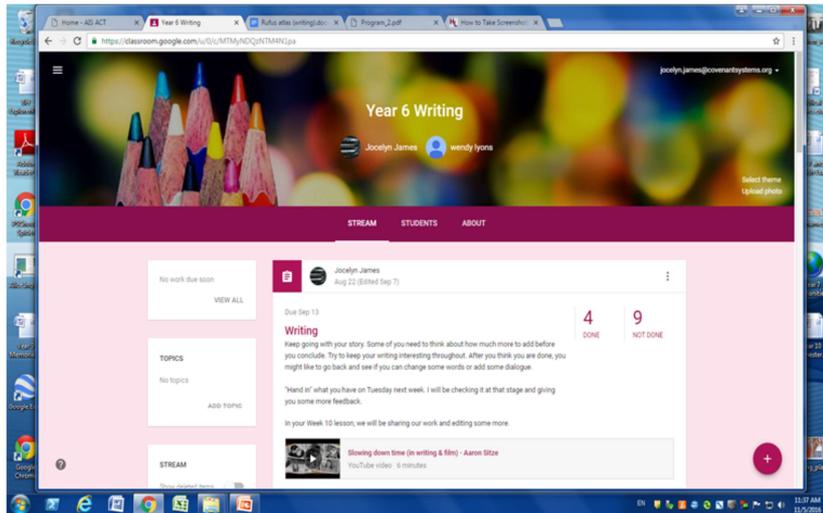
Like any measuring tool, there are limitations. Students may have performed better on a picture based task last year than a word based task this year. It will take a few more years to build up the data set but we think this will be useful to keep as part of our program.



When starting the Writer's workshop with Year 6 students, the first aspect I really wanted to convey was stamina. Great writing doesn't just happen, just as Baymax from *Big Hero 6* didn't just happen. Ideas take time to develop, there are unknown pitfalls along the way, setbacks, fine-tuning, and finally, the happiness that comes when it all just works.

I asked students to nominate where they were in the writing process. One boy, NL, reflected that he was in those early stages of development. Another (JD) said that he enjoyed writing and was at a later stage, where the ideas were often there but then he would be scratching his head trying to work out what to do next.

+ Google Classroom



I set up a classroom in Google for the Year 6 Writing class for two reasons – firstly, I only the students for 30 minutes, once a fortnight. I was able to post writing ideas into the classroom to encourage them in between lessons.

Secondly, I set small goals and they could post their writing in here on the weeks when we didn't have a lesson.

+ Some writing samples:

Jump! I thought as I went into the air. Crunch! went the rocks under my bike wheels. "Man, I am hungry for afternoon tea. I am going to ask mum if I can have some chips," I said to myself as I rode down the purple driveway. Screech! went the brakes on my bike. I looked up and I saw my brother doing weights. His big muscles going up and down, flexing.

"Where were we going?" I asked as we were in the car driving with some friends off road. After a while, there was sand everywhere and I was thinking to myself. "What are we doing out here in the sand?" My emotions were really happy mixed with excitement and nervousness....

It was really the most magnificent thing I had ever seen! My brother and I came out of the car first and I felt the sand on my shoes.

...When I first saw the sand dunes, I knew I wanted to climb them.

After working with the students for several sessions, they were able to see the importance of drawing a reader into the narrative by having an interesting setting or a captivating hook.

We ran out of time to work on more than one published writing piece. However, over the course of the time I spent with this class their culture was changing. With e-write and in class tasks, this group was attempting to write more. They were beginning to see that drafting is an important stage of writing, and that low stakes writing was giving them an opportunity to gain confidence and build stamina.



Differentiated learning in other classes

■ *I know. I'm the luckiest person in the world! It is freezing right now, even though it is a desert. My fingers, feet and whole body is numb. Wow! I never knew that I would actually miss the sun, it seems to be my enemy in the daytime. This is what happened: The plane just crashed. Thankfully, I am safe, although panicked, and the fact that I am stranded in the middle of the desert all on my own is just soaking in! After I eventually calm down, I gather all the resources from the plane and my backpack.*



In my other classes, we have been using a range of techniques and learning models to help students to break down that fear of not being able to write well from the first sentence.

Firstly, I often have students writing essay introductions collaboratively and editing each other's work.

Secondly, after key topics of learning in Humanities this year, I asked students to do extended empathetic writing tasks. One was on a Viking Journey (History) and the other pertained to desert survival (Geography).



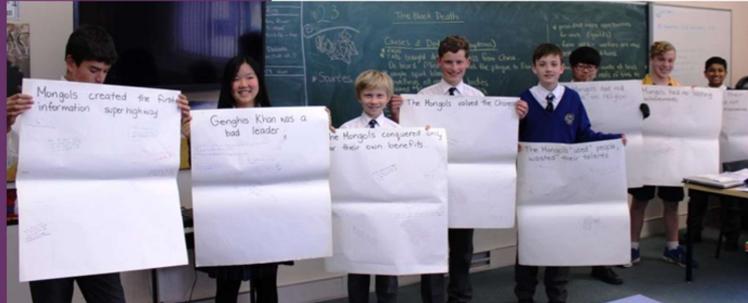
Lastly, Kathleen Kryza's ideas have been useful and enhanced some of our current practices.

Giving students the freedom to express ideas more creatively in that "chew" part of the process has meant that their subsequent writing has been deeper and more reflective.



Coaching

Stage
Three



Setting goals
Meetings
Observations
Feedback
Reflections

Officially, the coaching side has not been running this year. My coaching colleague stepped into a higher role which has been more demanding than originally envisaged and another key staff member has been ill for much of the year. Informally, many of these above stages have been happening and will continue to happen.



Sadness by HMS (Year 4)

She is like glass that can be
broken.
The storm is about to come,
And when she breaks
she turns to water.
Then she hardens to her form.
The storm stops
and she comes back together
again.



Professional conversations have been informal amongst other staff as well. The Year 4 teacher has been interested and taken writing further in his class. He often shares with me how his students are developing.

On this slide and the next are two recent poems from students in his class.

How beautiful it is!
White curtains are pulled down,
Beauty comes out to shine,
Birds come out to sing.
When she shows her radiance,
She leaves everyone speechless.
The frowning clouds leave,
The shining sun comes.
Glorious jewels bloom,
She is its centrepiece.

I could have included so many more!

(Read this one aloud)



Where are we now?

“It takes time for changes to “take root”, become established and then grow to maturity.

We are just starting to see our efforts “bud”.

The flower is there and with it, the promise that it will blossom into life and flourish.”

What I just read to you were the lines from last year’s presentation. I think you can see from this presentation that we are in the early flowering stage – we’ve moved along one image!

I believe students are more confident, knowing that we are encouraging them, without the pressure to perform to a certain level in every single task.

Our culture is changing... for the better. We are seeing the work permeate into other classes, even though it is still in the early stages.

Next year, hope to focus on Science classes and perhaps encourage the writing work being done in Grades 3 and 4 more actively.

We know that this will take time but we are thankful for the workshops, online modules, expertise of the ISQ staff and the support from the AIS, all of which has

enabled us to grow.



Thank you for your time. Are there any questions or comments?

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