WHAT IS GOOD FOR ALL IS PARTICULARLY GOOD FOR SOME:

AN EXPLORATION OF WRITING INSTRUCTION FOR STUDENTS WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES (ID)

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PURPOSE OF RESEARCH

To investigate:

- whether the conclusions that literacy researchers have made about the effective teaching of writing for typically developing students apply also to a classroom populated by students with ID; and

- what subsequent practice might look like.
BACKGROUND
RUNNING AN INCLUSIVE WRITING CLASSROOM

WHAT WE DID
We taught nine lessons (around three topics) over a three month period. The topics were:

- something naughty or funny you, your friend or a pet has got up to (personal recount);
- walking across the Twin Towers on a tightrope (imaginative recount);
- being attacked by a shark (narrative).

During each set of lessons, the following instructional strategies were used:

- **engaged students through a purposefully selected open topic.**
  
  Topics were chosen strategically to link to students’ personal interests, worldly interests and creative interests;

- **developed possible content related to the topic.**
  
  Students were encouraged, through deep questioning, to develop through talk some possible content for their approach to each topic;

- **established a clear writing task aligned to the topic.**
  
  Once engaged in a topic, students decided (with the teacher) what writing task they would undertake for each topic;
- developed criteria for success with students or reminded them of criteria if already developed.

Having decided on a topic and a task, the teacher asked students in all lesson sets: ‘What will we have to be good at as writers to do this task well?’

As initially prompted by the teacher, the students selected a content criterion (‘add detail’), a vocabulary criterion (‘use beautiful words’) and a process criterion (‘make changes’) for all three lesson sets.

- differentiated the instructional support given to students.

For all lesson sets, the teacher invited students to either remain with him or work independently.

- demonstrated or modelled expected outputs to students, especially those requiring additional support.

- held rich conversations with students about their writing.

These conversations were designed to generate deep metacognitive thinking by students through high cognitive demand questioning by the teacher.

Students were encouraged to think about why they had included particular details or used particular words in their texts;

- encouraged students to share and celebrate their writing achievement.

They did this by reading their texts aloud and giving each other feedback (about the content and impact of their writing) during and at the end of lessons.
THE CLASSROOM IN ACTION
SOME RESULTS

XX[aged 17]: T1 text, written over at most 2 sessions.

I have a fish at home
she lives in an aquarium
Her name is Cortinilla

The Color of Cortinilla is Orange

Cortinilla have lived with us for about 3 years

In The Daytime she swim around in her aquarium and sometimes my mother serves her some fish food
XX: T2 text, written over 3 sessions.

My best friend Oliver was standing on the Beach and saw a Great White Shark. Oh No I must try to swim away. I was swimming as fast as i could. But The Shark came closer and bit my left leg... So I lost it. I screamed because it hurt so much. Then i got scared because i saw how The Water be came darker, and Then i understand that The Water was filled with blooth.

Oliver rann out to The Water to help mee.

But The Shark come closer and bit my left leg off. I didnt knew right away that my leg was gone. But When I saw how the Water became darker with blooth I got scared and screamed I tried to move my left leg but I couldn't.

It was gone.

Oliver rann out to The Water to help mee and When Oliver came out to The Water The Shark Sundelly went for him.

I draged my self up on The Beach and Oliver Managed to get away from The Shark and All of a Sundel we both lied on The Beach in Seafty.

To

From

I have a fish at home
she lives in an aquarium
Her name is Cortinilla
The Color of Cortinilla is Orange
Cortinilla have lived with us for about 3 years
In The Daytime she swim around in her aquarium and sometimes my mother serves her some fish food

(48 words)
**T1**

Number of words in text: 48
Number of sentences in text: 6
Average number of words in sentences: 8
Number of ideas expressed in text (T-count): 7
Proportion of compound or complex sentences in text: 1/6 sentences (16.7%)
Proportion of sentences with grammatical errors in text: 2/6 sentences (33.3%)
Proportion of vocabulary that is beyond 1000 most commonly used words: 11.8%
Proportion of spelling or punctuation errors in text: 11/48 (22.9%)

The T1 text is a list of ideas expressed mainly in simple sentences. There is little detail in the text. Few connectives have been used to join ideas together. The vocabulary is simple but words have been spelled correctly.

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**T2**

Number of words in text: 147
Number of sentences in text: 11
Average number of words in sentences: 13.4
Number of ideas expressed in text (T-count): 16
Proportion of compound or complex sentences in text: 6/11 sentences (54.5%)
Proportion of sentences with grammatical errors in text: 3/11 sentences (27.3%)
Proportion of vocabulary that is beyond 1000 most commonly used words: 18%
Proportion of spelling or punctuation errors in text: 48/147 (32.7%)

The T2 text is a coherent narrative (beginning-middle-end) with ideas and details that link together. It contains a mixture of long and short sentences for effect. Vocabulary is richer than in T1 (e.g. dragged, screamed, scared, darker, managed) though spelling is a challenge. The text is correctly punctuated.

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**AA**

From

Here is a little story about me and my friend Alex.

One day I was a little bit angry. He showed me a little movie I didn’t like because it had a little scene that is annoying.

So I punched him in the face but I did it softly.

I tried to ignore him for a moment but he asked me what is wrong but I didn’t want to answer. After a while I said not to show the movie again.

(81 words)

To

There was a warm and sunny evening, it has not been raining for three days and I was in my house and I think to take a little swim.

- Mum would you like to follow me down to the beach or not?
- No thank you! I was out swimming a couple of hours ago.

So I took a towel and went down to the beach and I was all alone in the water. I swam way out, it was approximately 20 metres and after I was trying to turn around, suddenly there was many high waves and I was beginning to feel that something was after me.

I began to swim faster but the shark was faster than I was so under the water, the shark waited to eat me and I felt the shark cut my left arm off.

I felt a lot of pain and the blood ran out and I was trying to swim back to the shore with only one arm, that was very tough I began to feel tired but finally I was at the shore. My mother saw what happened from the house and she called the ambulance and after about ten minutes we was going away to the hospital.

When we arrived at the hospital I was sent to the emergency room and very soon the surgery began, I was anesthetized and I woke up after one hour and I didn’t know so much what happened but they put in a new arm.

(257 words)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p_JMEImHxPw