

Understanding Inquiry as Stance: The Journey of a Teacher of Writing

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Asking questions of your practice and
student learning outcomes

Think - pair - share

Recall the last writing lesson you conducted or observed.

- *Write three questions you had about the teaching practice and student learning outcomes
- *Share this with someone sitting next to you

My questions on my practice and student learning...

- 1) Why don't my students come up with interesting ideas?
- 2) Were they just going through the motions and following the structure I taught them to manufacture an essay?
- 3) Why were all of them coming up with similar ideas in their writing?
- 4) How do I get students to enjoy the process of writing?

Before: A typical writing class

- More product and practice oriented – assigning writing
- Strong emphasis on structure:

Eg: Expository writing, PEEL structure, language features

Inquiry as Stance

A reflective process I embarked on to meet student learning needs in the classroom.

“Describes the position a teacher takes towards knowledge and its relationships to practice”

Source: Understanding Inquiry as a Stance: Illustration and Analysis of One Teacher Researcher's Work

Inquiry as Stance

Questions I considered:

- *What do I expect my students to learn?
- *How will I know if they have learnt?
- *What will I do next if they have learnt?
- *How will I respond if they don't learn?

What did I aim for?

- * demonstrate understanding of writing as a complex, cognitive, linguistic and social process
- * enhance my pedagogical practice through the learning strategies implemented
- * improve my student learning outcomes
- * shift my beliefs- realisation that it's important for students to enjoy the process of writing rather than take it as an exercise
- * Teach students to express themselves and deepen their voice as writers

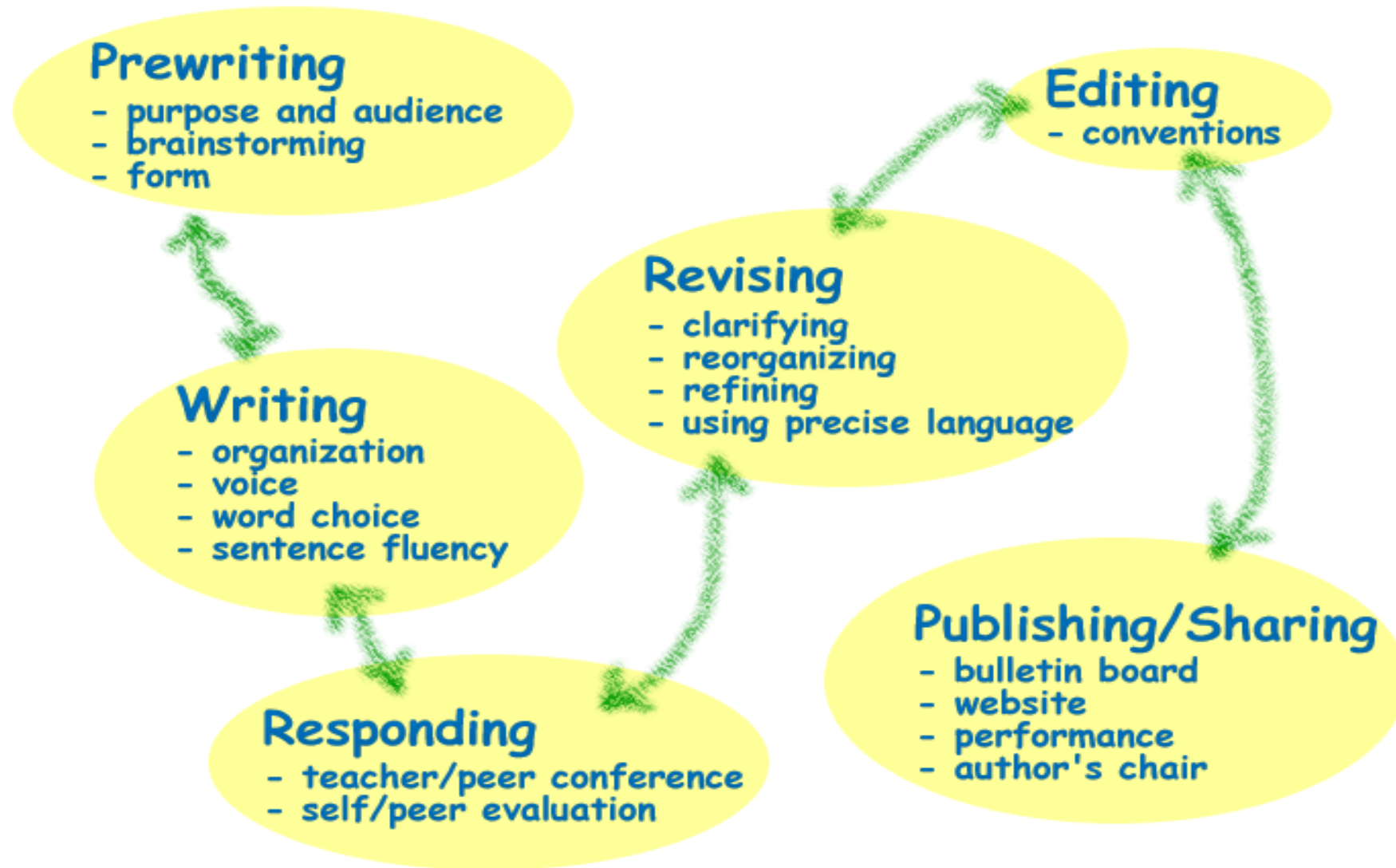
Building Subject Content Knowledge (SCK) and Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK)

Building SCK to gain a deeper understanding of how students learn...

I read the following to build my knowledge of practice:

- Flower and Hayes cognitive process model of writing
- Kelly Gallagher: Teaching Adolescent Writers
- Nancy Fichtman :Understanding Inquiry as a Stance
- Marilyn Cochran Smith and Susan Lytle: Relationships of knowledge and Practice (Teacher learning in Communities)
- EL Syllabus 2010

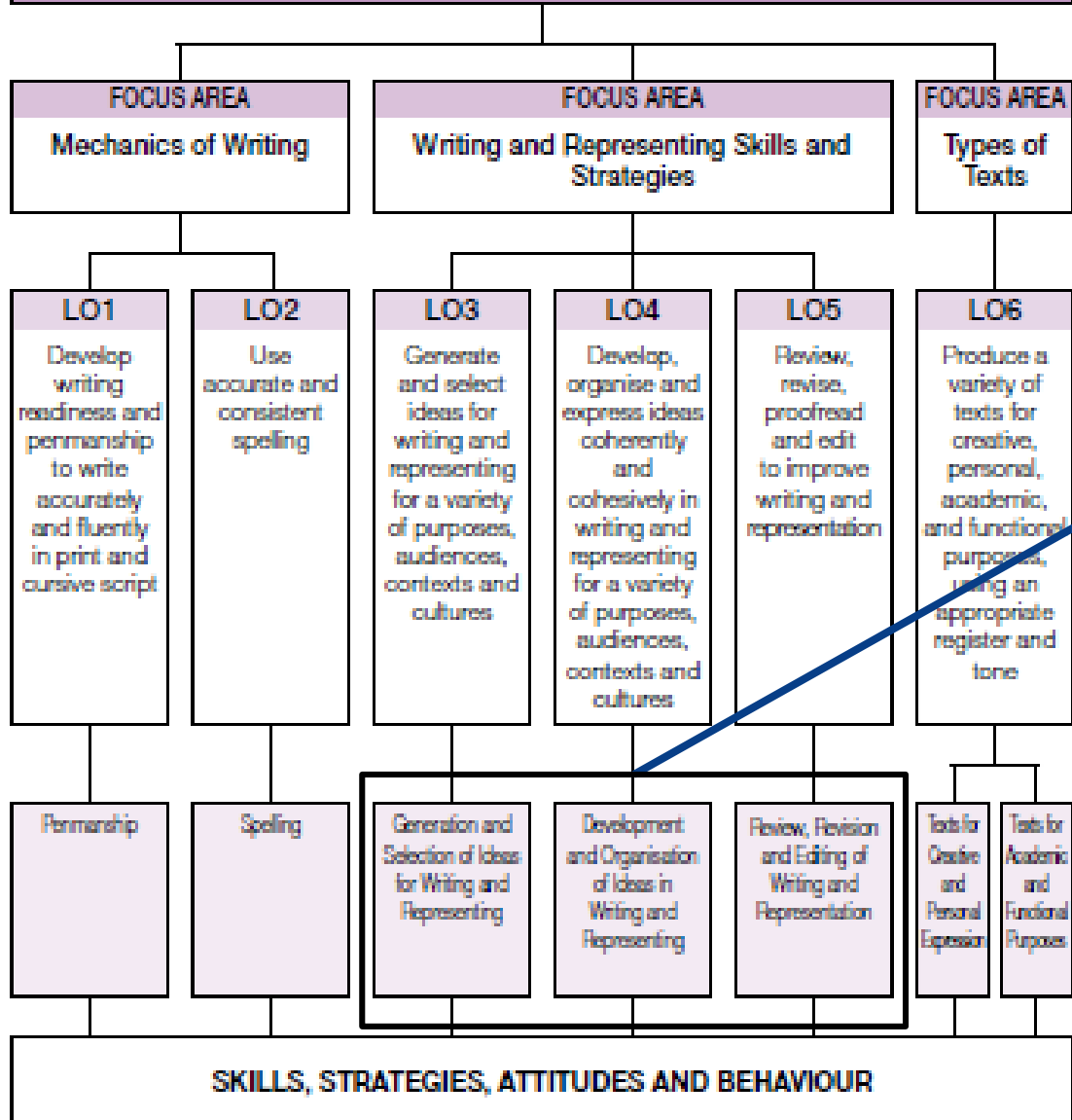
The Writing Process



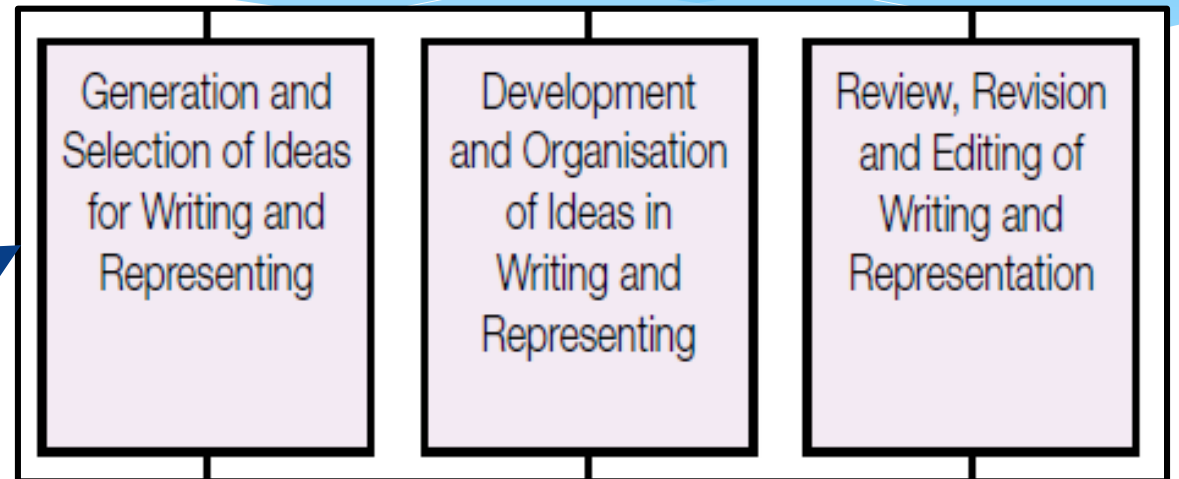
Overview Diagram

WRITING AND REPRESENTING

Develop writing readiness, penmanship and spelling accuracy, and apply skills and strategies for idea generation, selection, development, organisation and revision in writing and representing to address purpose, audience, context and culture in a variety of texts.



EL Syllabus 2010



Collaborative Journey with Mdm Shalini

1) Professional Learning Programme (Department Wide)

- Teaching of Writing as a process

2) Collaborative relationship with Mdm Shalini

- reflection of my teaching practices and researching my own practice was transformative

“I began by asking myself what I stood for, the lenses through which I perceived information and I had this desire to make learning conditions better for the students”

What did I do during this collaborative inquiry?

(Cycle repeated as I went through teaching the different aspects of the writing process)

Stage 1

- Classroom observation
- Post-lesson conference
- Journal writing begins

Stage 2

- Co-planning lesson with Master Teacher
- Co-teaching with Master Teacher
- Post-lesson conference

Stage 3

- Analysing students' pre-writing and writing
- Discussing students' pre-writing and writing and next steps

Stage 4

- Sharing my stories – not just success stories but more importantly what didn't go right, what I learnt and what I did about it...Using my journal as a point of reference throughout

My Journaling Practice

“I continued keeping the journal as it became a **constant point of reference**. It was the research I needed to **probe into practices that worked and what needed to be tweaked** to suit the profile and learning needs of the class.”

- I wrote before and after my lessons and noticed that my **perceptions** of how certain activities would turn out were largely proven wrong during the lesson.

- This gave me more confidence to implement the necessary changes in the classroom to ensure better learning outcomes.

Pre-Writing Learning Activities

In our students' shoes - Free writing

“A beautiful memory”

- Spend 4 minutes of your time writing about anything and everything that comes to your mind with regard to the title above.
- Don't worry about grammar, spelling or punctuation.
- There are NO right or wrong answers
- Just write!
- No talking please. Individual work only.

Making decisions about strategies

How, when and why do we use free writing for example?

- Profile of students: Gender and Age appropriate activities/prompts.
- Attitude towards writing and where they were at in terms of writing. They were unable to generate ideas and developed writer's block. Unable to develop a voice. Student interest in writing was lacking.
- Understanding Purpose and theory behind free writing: Idea Generation (LO3)
- Help students to generate ideas and use their experiences / prior knowledge to engage with the given topic

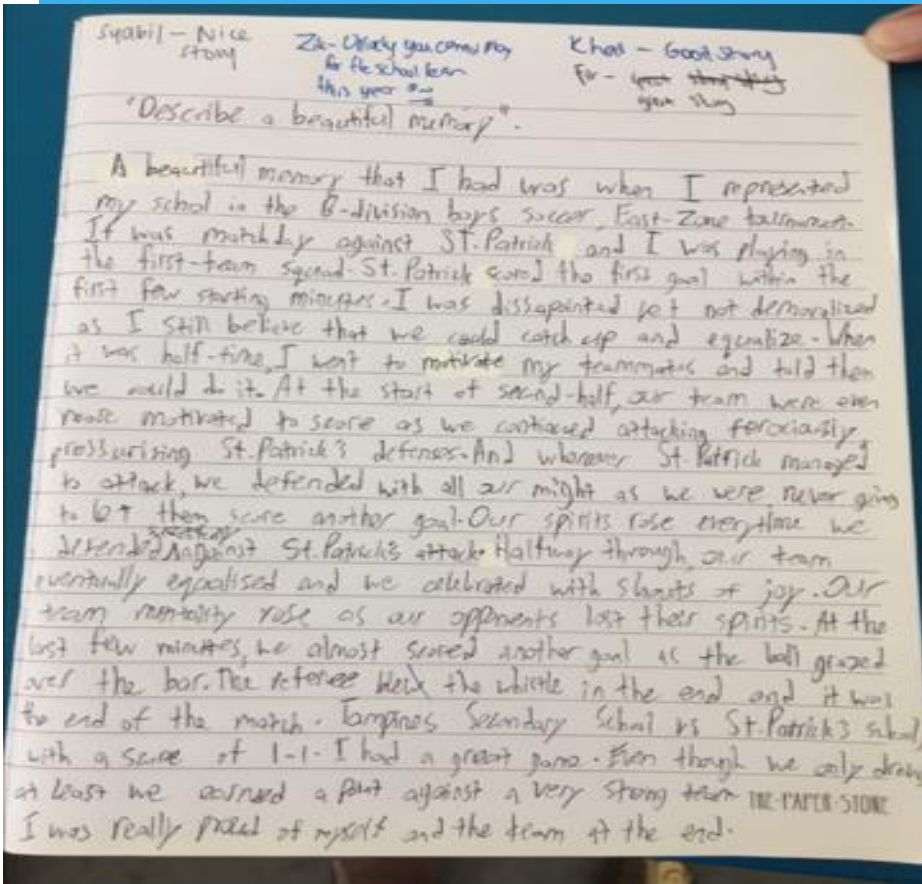
“A beautiful memory”- Descriptive writing

- Free writing allowed for students to generate their ideas on a given topic through 5 - 10 minutes of continuous writing. Grammar, spelling and punctuation would not be checked on. The ideas could be written in a fragmented manner as well.
- The Game Changer: The importance of silence

Writing is thinking

Comments or questions from the teacher would disrupt students' thoughts and thinking.

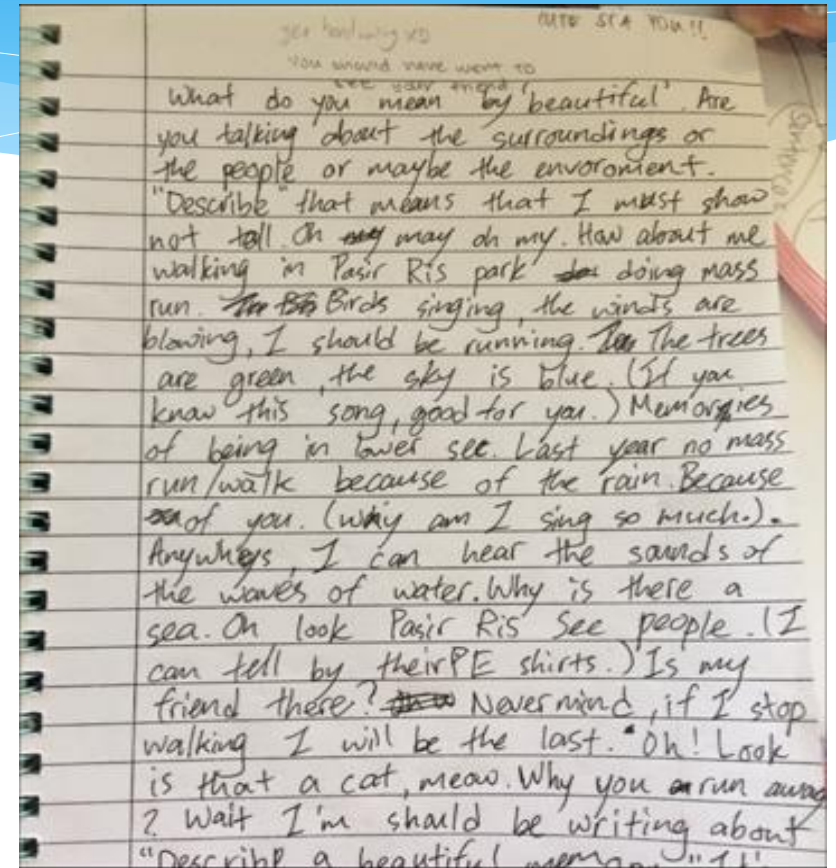
Some examples of Free Writing



1) Students were able to write continuously

2) Their writing tapped on their personal experiences

3) They became comfortable writing to express themselves



Journal Excerpt: "I was pleasantly surprised when the students were able to brainstorm and started writing with no resistance. The lack of a structure (PEEL) enabled them to approach the task with little to no apprehension."

The Writing Process



Thinking about Craft

* Writing and responding

- Organisation
- Word choice
- Sentence fluency
- Peer conference
- Self evaluation after exchange of ideas with peers
- Learning how to sustain the interest of the reader
- By this point, students would have produced one full draft of writing on the given topic 'A beautiful memory'.

Revising the first draft

STAR writing framework: What is it and why was it used?

1) Revising for Organisation and Language Use (LO5)

- Identifying language/content inappropriate to audience and context

- Improving sequencing, progression and coherence of ideas within and between paragraphs

- Correcting language for clarity of meaning

2) To give students autonomy over own writing

3) Greater awareness of what is writing that successfully allows students to *express themselves through the writing*

Learning Activity 4: STAR(T)

S (Substitute)	T (Take things out)	A (Add)	R (Rearrange)	T (Think)
<p>Replace:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- overused words- weak verbs with strong verbs- weak adjectives with strong adjectives- common nouns with proper nouns- "dead" words	<p>Take out:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- unnecessary repetitions- unimportant or irrelevant information- parts that might belong in another place	<p>Add</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- detail- description- new information- figurative language- development- clarification of meanings- expanded ideas	<p>Rearrange:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- the sequence to produce a desired effect- the order for a more logical flow	<p>Think about each revision decision with Purpose, Audience, Context and Culture in mind</p>

Adapted Gallagher, K. (2006). *Teaching adolescent writers*. Portland, Me: Stenhouse Publishers.

ELIS

An example of a student using STAR to revise

When I have gone to Marina Bay Sands multiple times before however, here was one special occasion that will be ^{embedded} sealed in my head forever. My cousin, Sara, and I had went to the pool at night. It was uncanny that my parents allowed us to go at ^{to the pool} night as they did not trust us when we were alone there at night. Usually, it is not comfortable to go here ^{during} in the day due to how congested, humid and blistering hot it is.

Marina Bay Sands has always been ^{a place that's} familiar to us. It is an ~~place~~ ~~they~~ integrated resort that a lot of people, mostly tourists, go to kick back and relax and forget about their worries and the hardships that come with life. I, myself have gone there many times before but out of all of those times, I remembered a particular occasion of when I had gone to the pool there with my cousin, Sara at night. I usually had to stick with going there in the day due to how ~~very~~ ~~my~~ concerned my parents are of my ability to swim.

An example of a student using STAR

I have gone to Marina Bay Sands multiple times before. However, there was one special occasion that will be seeded in my head forever. My cousin, Sara and I went to use the pool at night. It was uncanny that my parents allowed to go at night as they did not trust us when we were alone there at night. Usually it is not comfortable to go there in the day due to how congested, humid and blistering hot it was.

(After STAR)

Marina Bay Sands has always been a place that has been familiar to us. It is an integrated resort that a lot of people, mostly tourists, go there to kick back and relax and forget about the worries and the hardships that come with life. I, myself, have gone there many times, but of all these times, I remembered a particular occasion of when I had gone to the pool there with my cousin, Sara, at night. I usually had to venture there in the day as my parents have always been concerned about my abilities to swim. It was very congested, humid and blisteringly hot.

The writing may not be perfect but the student has begun to develop his voice through his writing. Authentic reference to own experience.

Student Feedback

Their response to pre-writing and revision
learning activities

Feedback from Student 1

I found that the adding of stronger adjectives and more descriptive details seemed to be the most obvious changes I could make to improve my essay. It tied in with the “show don’t tell” strategy that Miss Suma taught us earlier in the year. I tried to be more detailed, especially in the description of the setting.

Oh, for the freewriting, I felt that writing without worrying about grammar is refreshing. My ideas flowed and I could use the main points to develop a better essay.

Feedback from Student 2

Verbal interview conducted with two students: (17th April 2017)

1) How has the STAR strategy been useful for you?

It made me realise that I was repeating myself constantly. There were many areas I felt were redundant and I ended up rephrasing parts of my essay

2) Do you notice a difference in your writing before and after the revising process was implemented?

Yes! I feel like when I was paying attention to my writing, I picked out things I would not have noticed to improve on

My reflections of my practice and student learning

What did I learn about this process of inquiry?

The importance of:

- asking questions and reflecting on my practice and student learning
 - gathering evidence of student learning to inform next steps
 - reading journals etc to gain a better understanding of how students learn
 - analysing student pre-writing and writing to make pedagogically sound decisions about next steps
 - documenting my observations of students' progress in my journal
 - Setting aside time for prewriting, peer assessment, self assessment and review
- **Checking on student learning outcomes and constantly improving teaching and learning was fundamental in this journey!**

My reflections on the journey...

- The writing process cycle
 - Process oriented rather than product oriented
 - Creating joy in writing by making writing meaningful – tapping on students' prior knowledge and experience
 - Creating curriculum time for 'pre-writing', 'writing', 'revision' and 'editing'

Effect on student learning outcomes and my beliefs

Students

- * Some of the students began enjoying the process of writing as it became an expression of their creativity and ideas.
- * Rich learning experiences and interactions in the classroom
- * Change in the attitude towards learning in the students

My beliefs

- * There was an obvious shift within myself which was reflected in my own teaching
- * I began to transfer my SCK and PCK in my lesson design
- * I started becoming more self reflective and constantly questioned if my students were learning

Acknowledgement

- * I would like to thank Mr Kwok, my principal, and Mdm So and Mrs Chen, my vice-principals for their guidance
- * Mr Albert Tsui, my Head of Department, for his constant support and encouragement.
- * Miss Shen and Miss Hannah, my subject heads, for taking the time to offer their wisdom during the moments I needed it.
- * Mdm Shalini, the most important part of my journey! For teaching, mentoring and being patient with me as I explored ways and means to improve my teaching of writing.
- * It has been a wonderful journey and I am grateful!

Learning from Suma's experience

Next steps for the EL Department by Ms Shen Simin

Impact within EL Department

As a follow up to the Teaching of Writing and Representing Professional Learning Programme (6 Modules) we wanted a more dynamic approach towards the teaching of writing.

This meant:

- * Providing students with greater autonomy and choice in writing
- * Process-orientation as opposed to product-focus in the teaching of writing
- * Gaining a greater understanding of what motivates students to enjoy writing
- * Teachers needing support in making sound pedagogical decisions

Future Direction of TPSS EL Dept

- * 2017: PLTs exploring pre-writing and revising to facilitate process writing, differentiated for different levels (lower sec / upper sec)
 - * Exploring application in teaching different types of texts (i.e. narrative, exposition, descriptive writing etc.)
- * 2018: Adjustment of SOW to support new attitudes / culture change towards the teaching of writing
 - * Explore application of inquiry as stance in the teaching of different language areas (i.e. reading, speaking, listening)

Growth Mindset@TPSS

- * Alignment with TPSS's teaching philosophy
- * A prior outcome does not determine a future outcome
- * Room to try and fail, striving towards continuous improvement

A Collaborative Inquiry
My Journey with Suma
by Shalini

What is inquiry as stance?

- * Inquiry as stance is... a worldview, a habit of mind, a dynamic and fluid way of knowing and being in the world of educational practice that carries across the course of the professional career – not a teacher training strategy, a sequence of steps for solving classroom or school problems, or a skill to be demonstrated by beginners to show competence.

The Reflective Practice Model (Page 42, STP)

Adapted Reflective Practice	Questions we can ask in our inquiry
Asking “what”	What is the situation/context?
Asking “why”	Why is addressing/learning about this crucial, based on my beliefs about T & L?
Asking “so what”	So what ideas, knowledge and theories can I learn to help me understand the situation/issue I am facing?
Asking “now what”	Now what can I do to improve the situation or how can I approach the situation/issue?

Rolfe, G., Freshwater, D., & Jasper, M. (2001). *Critical reflection for nursing and the helping professions: A user's guide*. Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan.

Schön, D. (1987). *Educating the reflective practitioner*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

In summary...by Suma

Today's sharing is not about a new pedagogy - it is about adopting a new attitude towards teaching and recognising that it is an on-going process to gain a deeper understanding of how students learn

- * Language and refinement is a process
- * Attitude of classroom teacher: "Less me, more them."
- * A shift in classroom dynamic: Facilitation more than instruction

References

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*Thank You