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## Just enough writing time?

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## Just enough writing time?

With just three weeks to go before schools are out for the summer can you make more time for writing and write alongside your young writers? Can you leave behind the end of year writing assessments/interim framework now? Why not give yourself permission to sit down amongst them and have a go at doing what they're doing: free writing, drawing, talking and preparing to compose the final piece of the year – preferably a piece of their own choosing.

Perhaps they'll want to revisit their favourite genre and write a poem, a story, a letter or a blog? What might you choose? Will you publish this work? Maybe it would be easier and more productive to return to an earlier piece? Something that was begun and never finished -that never quite got polished and published? Can time be made to create a final anthology of your class' collected works -a tangible artefact that celebrates your collective success as writers? If not, what about setting yourselves a Summer Writing Challenge and after writing with them, inviting children to finish their self-selected writing and bring it to share in their new classes the first week back. It would make a rich Summer Writing display in the entrance hall alongside staff writing too!

I am unsure how many teachers participate as writers in school. However from myriad conversations at conferences and courses, my guess is not that many practitioners participate as teacher-writers in the curriculum. Time is tight and teachers are understandably aware that such an activity will temporarily reduce the space for explicit teaching and overt instruction. However, instead of travelling from group to group, trouble-shooting and supporting individuals, if we regularly write alongside the young we will be offering them writing role-models and learning about composing from inside the process. As a result we will be better positioned to support their development as young writers.

In the Teachers as Writers project many teachers - both primary and secondary- wrote alongside younger writers for the first time. Several observed this enabled them to 'experience the same struggles', to 'stop interfering' and 'start considering the challenges involved'. For some this re-positioning prompted novel conversations in class about being a writer and helped them re-focus on notions of authorship and the significance of composition and effect. Others also voiced the view their awareness of the iterative unfolding nature of writing increased and that they became more sensitive to the social and emotional demands of writing. Teachers also perceived that through paying attention to the children's choices, they found out more about the young people's interests and passions, perceptions and values.

Perhaps too you can create that 'shoes off' atmosphere that pervaded Totleigh Barton, (the Arvon residential writing centre which the TAW teachers so enjoyed), and afford more informal space for writing? Might you create writing nooks in the classroom or library (with cushions and clipboards/journals) and seize the chance to write outside on the playground in the sunshine? Such opportunities to write off timetable as it were , about subjects of their own choosing, in places characterised by informality and collegiality may help you all enjoy more of a sense of a writing community.

However as one of the project teachers noted

It's not going to be an overnight job is it? ...I think we're going to have to build that culture of actually 'we're writers' in here. We're not doing writing or having writing done to us.

Such a culture takes time to build, but without teachers engaging themselves as writers in the classroom there is a danger that they'll simply be 'doing writing' or having writing done to them - framed and defined as it is by current policy documentation and assessment rubrics.

The choice is yours. Time is tight.