

Book Review: Writing for impact: Teaching students how to write with a plan and spell well

Reviewed by **Jan Roberts.**

Tom Nicholson and Sue Dymock,
*Writing for impact: Teaching students
to write with a plan and spell well*,
NZCER Press, 2018

Writing for Impact:
teaching students
to write with a plan
and spell well is

presented as a set of two A4 books, Volumes 1 and 2. Applying results of meta-analysis, Volume 1 compares approaches to the teaching of writing. Volume 2 summarises 10 different writing strategies and provides teaching lessons implementing the most effective approaches, emphasising the importance of teaching structure, planning and reviewing, as well as a large section on spelling.

VOLUME 1 is organised in three parts, with sub chapters:

- Part 1: *Introduction*
- Part 2: *Getting the content write* [sic] In seven chapters, Part 1 discusses research evidence which demonstrates the best way to teach writing; the two approaches that make a difference; narrative writing, persuasive writing; and assessing writing.
- Part 3: *Conventions* In fifteen chapters, Part 3 expands on teaching vocabulary; grammar and punctuation; spelling (in some detail); handwriting and keyboarding skills: and summarising the discussion in Parts 1, 2 and 3

VOLUME 2 is organised in *Appendices* A-E. These appendices apply the strategies discussed in Volume 1 as follows:

- fiction library resources and lesson plans for narrative writing (for Years 2-4 and 5-7);
- non-fiction library resources and lesson plans (for Years 3-7);
- spelling lesson plans.

The authors expand on evidence from the effect size data of different methodologies to show:

- the need to teach students to organise and manage their writing;
- how to structure and use organisational strategies to ensure their writing is cohesive and complete;
- how to use self-regulating strategies to monitor their work and check that they are achieving their writing goals.

The two approach options demonstrated are:

- the *READ-WRITE Inquiring School* model, with the teacher using an exemplar text as a writing springboard; and
- the *Self-regulated Strategy Development* model (SRSD), with a focus on setting and monitoring writing goals.

Chapter 3 expands on these approaches.

Some of the outstanding features of this resource is the wealth of accompanying graphic models, such as planning methods, the useful lists and assessment rubrics, and other useful references and especially the video resources. A table on page 15 compares the effect sizes for different ways of teaching writing in six different meta-analyses and, like a picture, is 'worth a thousand words' in showing, for example, that goal-setting, strategies and peer assistance are very effective and that process writing and especially teaching grammar out of context are

not. The section on teaching spelling is very comprehensive.

VOLUME 2 also provides explicit lesson plans and colourful model springboard texts. Teachers would need to enlarge these, as the two double pages of the fiction and non-fiction texts that are presented per page of this book are too small to be read easily from the book by children. The spelling section takes up half the book so is very thorough in showing *The big 10 Spelling Rules* in detail. The accompanying lesson plans are explicit, as are all the lessons in the book, and would be easy to follow.



Summary

Writing for Impact, written in user-friendly language, is very well organised, clearly set out and colourful, and conveys a wealth of research and practical knowledge on the teaching of writing. For experienced teachers, *Writing for Impact* clarifies the relative value of different approaches and outlines methods that could fine-tune and expand these teachers' current teaching strategies. For new teachers, *Writing for Impact* could be their bible in two readable volumes for explicit teaching of writing. After implementing the suggested teaching plans, these teachers could use them as models to develop their own, in ways that should lead to very satisfying results for all.

Highly recommended

Jan Roberts is a long standing Consultant member of LDA, and a former President of LDA and Convenor of the LDA Consultants Committee.