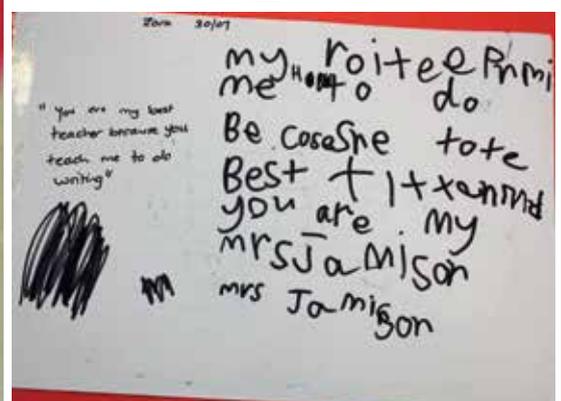EDITH COWAN UNIVERSITY

Reflective Practice with Teachers of Early Writers 2014

A Professional Learning Research Project for Early Childhood Teachers

Ms Janet Fellowes

Professor
Caroline Barratt-Pugh

Ms Amelia Ruscoe

Centre for Research in Early Childhood – School of Education – Edith Cowan University

Acknowledgements

Research team

Professor Caroline Barratt-Pugh
(Director: Centre for Research in Early Childhood)

Ms Janet Fellowes
(School of Education, ECU)

Ms Amelia Ruscoe
(School of Education, ECU)

Contents

Introduction

Reflective Practice with Teachers of Early Writers was a professional learning project that sought to develop teacher understanding and practice in relation to how young children learn to communicate through writing.

The project, which was funded by the Association of Independent Schools of Western Australia (AISWA), was a collaborative venture between AISWA and Edith Cowan University (ECU). It built on the success of the 2013 project, *Creating Texts with 21st Century Early Learners* in which teachers undertook an action research project to explore effective ways of facilitating early writing.

The 2014 project aimed to create a community of learners to explore early writing through sharing and challenging knowledge, understanding and practices in order to enhance early writing development. The experiences presented throughout the project were diverse but consistently designed to challenge the participants thinking and practice. The participants were engaged in deep reflection of their knowledge, beliefs and attitudes about how young children learn to write and about effective ways of developing children's communication through writing. Key experiences evolved from an action research project and included interactive presentations, personal reading, classroom-based data collection and analysis, collaborative sharing and discussion and professional learning journals.

Embedded in these experiences was a nurturing of the teacher participants' capacity for self-reflection, pedagogical innovation and risk taking and support for teachers to collaboratively determine and pursue their own development.

The project enabled the original professional learning framework (developed in the previous project) to be refined, so that the balance of experiences afforded optimal learning opportunities for teachers. The framework reflects the importance of embedding teacher learning within teacher practice and of the efficacy of reflective practice for enhancing teacher learning and professional growth over time.

The project outcomes were positive in that each teacher made some level of adjustment or added to their classroom practices in such a way as to enhance their students' motivation for writing and their writing development. Most noteworthy was the attention given to the topic of the communicative nature of written texts. Many teachers reported adopting new practices or changing features of the writing environment so as to cultivate this understanding with their students. Several talked about the benefit to children's engagement with writing when they repositioned their teaching emphasis from the skills of writing to the idea that written texts are about meaningful communication created for a particular purpose aimed at a specific audience.

About the professional learning framework

The project involved the implementation of a professional learning framework, underpinned by a set of **seven principles** of effective professional learning for teachers. The principles align to those attributes of teacher professional learning that have been identified in the research as having a positive impact on teacher quality and in turn their students' learning (Armour & Makopoulou, 2012; Hargreaves, 2013; Maloney & Konza, 2011; Opfer & Pedder, 2011; Phillips, 2008; Pitsoe & Maila, 2012; Vescio, Ross & Adams, 2008). The professional learning framework of this project (see Table 1) is based on the following principles:

1. **Responsive:** Professional learning is effective when the topics and experiences it comprises are determined in relation to participants' own needs and learning objectives and when participants' existing knowledge and the features of their specific teaching contexts are taken into account.

2. **Relevant:** Professional learning is effective when participants identify the content and pedagogical knowledge addressed to be useful to their own teaching situations and when they have the opportunity to consider it in relation to the needs of and learning objectives for the children in their own classes.

3. **Collaborative:** Professional learning is effective when participants can work in partnership with others and support one another to make sense of new knowledge and ideas. It is effective when they are provided with the opportunity to talk together and share practices, issues, opinions and ideas, to examine beliefs and to find solutions to problems. The enhancement of children's learning is effectively achieved when teachers collectively and collegially pursue their professional growth.

4. **Critically Reflective:** Professional learning is effective when participants are assisted to consciously think about and critique their own practices in relation to their children's learning. This can be achieved through authentic discussion between participants involving description and justification of practice, articulated at a high level of conceptualisation and taking account of broader contextual factors.

5. **Active:** Professional learning is effective when participants are involved in dynamic learning experiences such as discussion, problem solving, case studies and inquiry.

6. **Informative:** Professional learning is effective when participants are provided with current research about effective teaching and learning that supports their theoretical as well as practical learning.

7. **Ongoing:** Professional learning is effective when it involves continued participation over an extended period of time and when participants recognise that development is an ongoing pursuit.

Table 1: Principles of the Framework for the Professional Learning of Teachers' of Early Writers

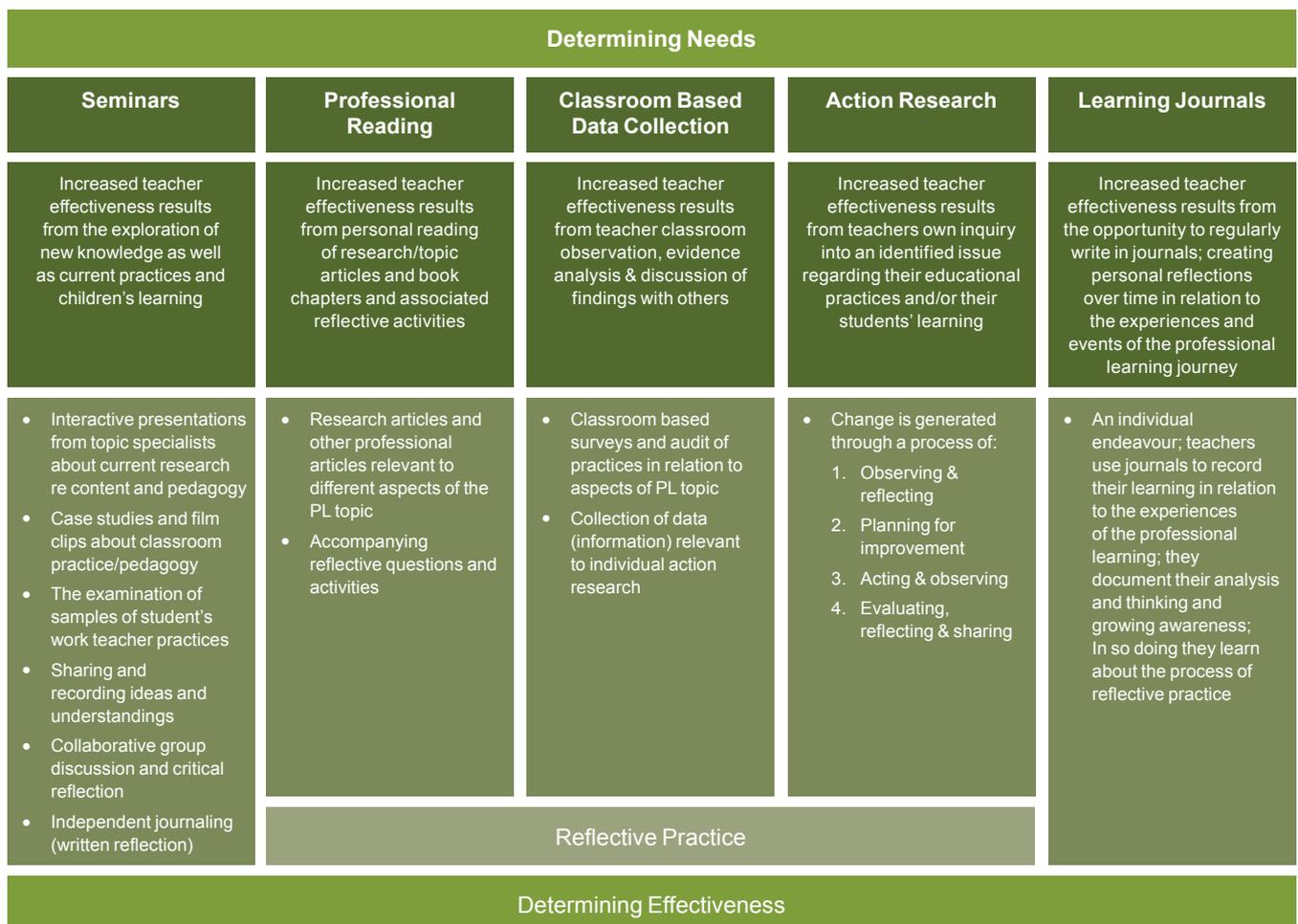|	
Responsive	The content is planned in relation to participants' current knowledge, learning needs and personal goals and the features of their specific teaching situations
Relevant	The content is useful to participants own teaching situations; and they can consider it in relation to the needs of and learning objectives for the children in their own classes
Collaborative	Involves participants working in partnership with others – talking together, sharing practices, issues, opinions and ideas, and examining beliefs and finding solutions to problems
Critically Reflective	Participants are assisted to consciously think about and critique their own practices in relation to their children's learning
Active	Involves dynamic learning experiences such as discussion, problem solving, case studies and inquiry
Informative	Participants are provided with current research about effective teaching and learning opportunities that supports their theoretical as well as practical learning
Ongoing	Involves continued participation over an extended period of time and recognition from participants that development is an ongoing pursuit

The framework comprises various *elements of practice*, each of which is important to ensuring teacher learning and development is supported through a balance of appropriate experiences (Figure 1). The elements of practice are:

- **Determining needs**: the collection and analysis of data from the teachers for the purpose of determining their current understanding and practices in relation to the teaching and learning of early writing as well as their goals and interests.
- **Seminars:** regular opportunities to get together with teacher colleagues and experts in the field to explore new knowledge about the teaching and learning of writing and to collaborate with others in order to, reflect, critically analyse, share and determine ways forward.
- **Professional reading:** personal reading and reflective analysis of research articles and other literature useful to learning and development goals in relation to teaching writing.
- **Classroom based data collection:** regular gathering of evidence of student learning – writing samples, survey and questionnaire results, observations.

- **Action research:** Independent inquiry into an issue, topic or learning need relevant to own classroom situation, which becomes part of the cycle of teaching and learning.
- **Learning Journals:** documentation of own personal learning journey through written narrative carried out over the duration of the professional learning project.
- **Determining effectiveness:** the collection and analysis of data for the purpose of determining the teachers learning and development, their pedagogical adaptations and effects on students learning as well as to determine the effectiveness of the professional learning experiences.

Important to each of the elements that comprised the professional learning framework was the notion of *reflective practice* which involved the teachers thinking about and challenging their own understanding, practices and beliefs for the purpose of nurturing insights and shifts in thinking. To guide the reflective process the experiences of the professional learning project were imbued with opportunities for teachers to engage in dialogue, answer probing questions, solve problems, analyse personal experience, critically appraise new information and apply to their own class context.

Figure 1: The professional learning framework for the Reflective Practice with Teachers of Early Writers' Project

Determining Needs				
Seminars	**Professional Reading**	**Classroom Based Data Collection**	**Action Research**	**Learning Journals**
Increased teacher effectiveness results from the exploration of new knowledge as well as current practices and children's learning	Increased teacher effectiveness results from personal reading of research/topic articles and book chapters and associated reflective activities	Increased teacher effectiveness results from teacher classroom observation, evidence analysis & discussion of findings with others	Increased teacher effectiveness results from teachers own inquiry into an identified issue regarding their educational practices and/or their students' learning	Increased teacher effectiveness results from the opportunity to regularly write in journals; creating personal reflections over time in relation to the experiences and events of the professional learning journey
- Interactive presentations from topic specialists about current research re content and pedagogy - Case studies and film clips about classroom practice/pedagogy - The examination of samples of student's work teacher practices - Sharing and recording ideas and understandings - Collaborative group discussion and critical reflection - Independent journaling (written reflection)	- Research articles and other professional articles relevant to different aspects of the PL topic - Accompanying reflective questions and activities	- Classroom based surveys and audit of practices in relation to aspects of PL topic - Collection of data (information) relevant to individual action research	- Change is generated through a process of: - Observing & reflecting - Planning for improvement - Acting & observing - Evaluating, reflecting & sharing	An individual endeavour; teachers use journals to record their learning in relation to the experiences of the professional learning; they document their analysis and thinking and growing awareness; In so doing they learn about the process of reflective practice
	Reflective Practice			
Determining Effectiveness				

Teacher participants

The professional learning project for teachers of early writing involved the participation of sixteen pre-primary teachers from a range of independent schools in Perth. The teachers were volunteer participants in that they were interested in the topic of early writing and had applied to participate. Of the sixteen teachers, eight were participating with another teacher from the same school.

Table 2: Participant Information – number of children in class, number of EAL children in class, and S-E status of school families.

Teacher	Class size	EAL	S-E status (school families)
A	?	0	mid
B	29	5 (17%)	high
C	19	0 (0%)	low
D	25	8 (32%)	range
E	30	?	low / mid
F	26	6 (23%)	high
G	13	6 (22%)	low / mid
H	23	5 (22%)	mid
I	22	1 (4%)	mid
J	27	0 (0%)	high
K	12	5 (42%)	range
L	25	1 (4%)	mid
M	25	3 (12%)	mid – high
N	30	20 (67%)	low / mid
O	22	0 (0%)	low
P	23	2 (9%)	low / mid

The attributes of the participants' classes varied. The class sizes ranged from 12 to 30 children and, while some teachers taught a pre-primary class, others taught a mixed class (e.g. kindergarten and pre-primary or pre-primary and Year 1). Seventy-five percent of the participants' classes comprised children who spoke a language other than English as their first language and, fifty percent of them included children from low socio-economic status families.

There was a range of teaching experience across the participant group and although they were all from independent schools in Perth, they encompassed a range of settings and philosophical beliefs. The philosophical basis of several schools clearly influenced teaching approaches.

Implementing the professional learning framework: Pre-primary teachers and early writing

The professional learning project took place over a period of six months and involved four seminar days where the teacher participants came together as a group to learn, share, discuss, analyse, reflect, set new goals and refine others. Moreover, it involved classroom based data collection, action research, learning journals and professional reading. While many of these activities took place independent of the seminar days they were inextricably linked to the experiences and events of the seminars.

1. Determining needs

The first of the professional learning seminars which was held in May, primarily served to introduce the participants to the project and each other and for project leaders to draw together an understanding of the participants – their teaching contexts, learning and development aspirations, knowledge and practices and needs, concerns and interests in relation to the teaching and learning of written communication (Appendix 1 & 2). The gathering of this information was important as it was to be the basis for decisions about the theoretical and pedagogical content to be addressed through the course of the project. Of course, such decisions were flexible and as the project progressed, different interests and needs were unearthed and so the content and experiences were continually reshaped.

The general information about each participants teaching context that was collected comprised:

- Year level
- Number of children in the class
- Average age of the children
- Socio-economic background of families
- Provision of physical classroom space
- Educational assistants in the classroom
- Other adult assistance (other than parents) in the classroom
- Number of children for whom English is a second or additional language
- First or home languages (other than English) spoken by children
- Family involvement (with school / classroom)
- Other features of the teaching situation that teachers would like to highlight

Participants' current knowledge and practices pertaining to the teaching and learning of writing was determined by means of a simple written survey which each teacher individually completed. The survey questions were:

- What does a young writer need to know for writing to emerge?
- What is the most effective way to teach / support a child who is learning to write?
- What do you do in your classroom that you know 'works' (what are you doing well)?
- What aspects of emergent writing and / or teaching and learning practices do you hope to learn more about through this project?

Additional information was gleaned from small group discussions which were directed by the same questions as the survey.

What does a young writer need to know for writing to emerge?

The written data regarding the survey question, *What does a young writer need to know for writing to emerge?* was examined in relation to areas of learning as currently identified in the literature (Dunsmuir & Blatchford, 2004; Fellowes & Oakley, 2014; Mayer, 2007 & Roskos, Tabors & Lenhart, 2009) as being important foundations for learning to write. Table 3 shows participant responses in relation to 12 important areas of foundational literacy learning.

Table 3: The aspects of learning to write identified by teachers as being important to what a young writer needs to know for writing to emerge

Teacher	Writing as communication	Concepts of print	Oral language competency	Phonological awareness	Phonemic awareness	Letter knowledge	Alphabetic principle	Sound / letter correspondence	Encoding	Fine motor coordination	Pencil grip	Motivation & engagement	Number of areas identified
A	■	■	■		■			■			■		6
B			■	■		■						■	4
C	■	one only			■	■		■				■	6
D	■		■			■		■		■			5
E	■											■	2
F	■	one only			■	■		■			■		6
G					■			some					2
H		■				some							2
I		■	■		■			■			■		5
J			■	■			■			■			4
K		■	■	■				■					4
L	■							some					2
M	■		■		■	■		■			■	■	7
N	■											■	2
O					■	■		■			■		4
P		one only									■		2
	8	**7**	**7**	**3**	**7**	**7**	**1**	**10**	**0**	**2**	**6**	**5**	
	50%	**44%**	**44%**	**19%**	**44%**	**44%**	**6%**	**62%**	**0%**	**12%**	**38%**	**31%**	

■ Indicates areas identified

Analysis of the data suggests that the teachers are familiar with many important areas of learning to write but indicates that exploration of additional areas might augment their understanding of early writing. For example, while one teacher acknowledged seven of the twelve areas, all other teachers singled out a more limited range. Graphophonic knowledge (letter / sound correspondence) was most often mentioned with sixty-two per cent of the teachers listing this as an area of importance for learning to write and the next most often cited area, which 50% of teachers mentioned, was learning that writing is a form of communication. Important to note is that, while forty-four per cent of teachers mentioned concepts of print, some of them only referred to one concept (directionality). This was also the case for other areas such as phonemic awareness and oral language competency where only subsets of these areas were noted on participant survey responses. The important skill of encoding was not rated in answer to question one; however, it was discussed in response to other questions. Understanding of the alphabetic principle was commented on by one teacher only.

In considering this data it is important to be aware of the context in which the data was collected and the nature of the data collection process; a different method or a range of methods might have yielded different results.

What is the most effective way to teach / support a child who is learning to write? What do you do in your classroom that you know 'works' (what are you doing well?)

These two questions served to determine teachers' pedagogical practices for the teaching of writing and what teachers know about how to teach early writing. The key ideas (Figure 2) that emerged from the teachers' answers to these two questions were:

- The classroom environment – emotionally supportive and print rich
- The teaching strategies of modelled and shared writing
- The provision of writing experiences that are meaningful and related to topics of personal significance
- The explicit teaching of phonemic awareness and graphophonic knowledge
- Differentiated learning – small groups of children or one-to-one
- Play and free writing opportunities
- Pre-writing experiences: talk, drawing
- Hands-on experiences
- Repetition and practice

Figure 2: Participants' responses to two survey questions

What is the most effective way to teach/support a child who is learning to write?
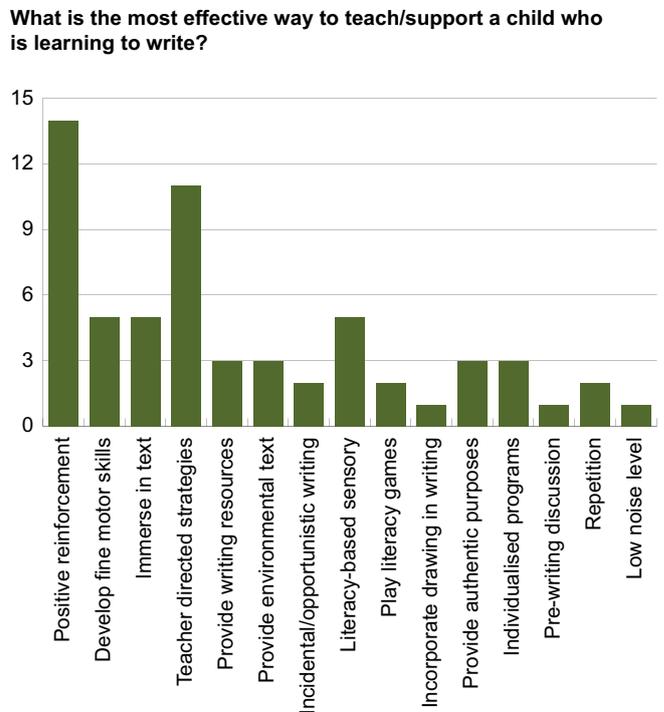
Strategies that 'work'
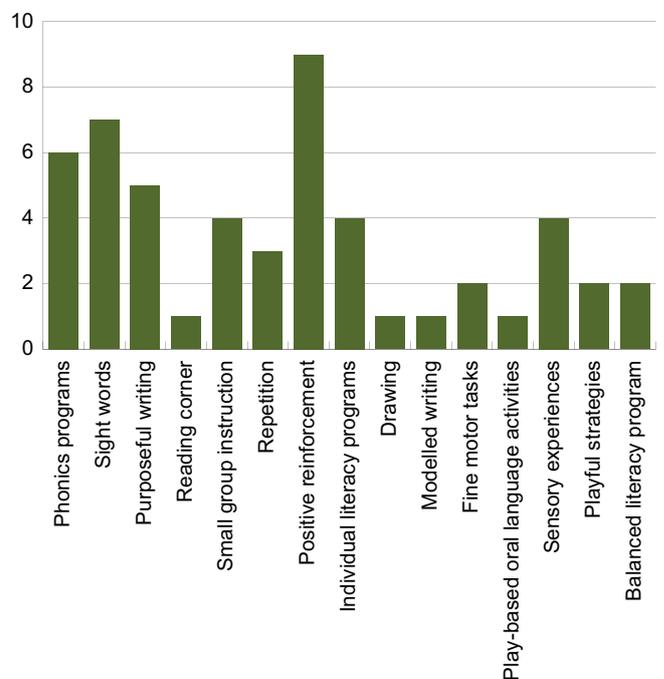
The most frequently occurring comment was in relation to the importance of developing a secure and supportive environment for children to write. These comments focused on encouragement of and praise for writing effort, accepting all writing attempts, not becoming overly concerned about mistakes and celebrating achievements. There was also frequent acknowledgment of the use of 'hands-on' resources, playful experiences and a print-rich environment. The explicit teaching of phonological awareness and graphophonic knowledge was identified as being important by six teachers.

What aspects of emergent writing and / or teaching and learning practices do you hope to learn more about through this project?

Teachers' goals and aspirations for their professional learning covered a range of topics and ideas but it was the idea of 'motivation and engagement' that most frequently surfaced as an area of anticipated learning. Additionally, many teachers were less specific and desired simply to increase their pedagogical repertoire for writing. For some teachers, goals related to far more precise areas such as how to teach pencil grip and how to tackle letter reversals.

Other topics highlighted were:

- play and writing
- foundational skills and competencies
- writing across learning areas
- writing support for EAL children
- differentiated teaching and learning
- parent involvement and home-school partnerships
- motivation and engagement

Many teachers were also keen to work with colleagues and learn from each other as suggested by the comments made during the discussions, such as:

I believe that as teachers we learn the most from each other. So I believe that I'm going to learn a lot here [from other teachers].

Teachers are such a valuable resource to each other, so don't underestimate that.

Sharing ideas is so awesome.

I've got a challenge in my classroom … you guys might actually have strategies that I can put into place that may assist me.

It's good to bounce the ideas off each other in a safe environment.

Other teachers were keen to engage in classroom based inquiry; comments made in respect to this included, "I'm quite excited by the Action Research Project … I want to have a purpose for collecting data in [my] classroom" and, "To see a [research] project through I think is quite exciting. That's what I'd like to do."

2. The seminar days

A significant component of the professional learning project was the seminars which involved bringing the teacher participants together as a professional learning team for the purpose of developing their knowledge about the teaching and learning of writing and about how to best address the needs of the children they teach. Working collaboratively, the teachers could support each other as they explored new content and pedagogy knowledge, refined their current practices and considered how to shape the learning of the children in their classes. The seminar days which occurred on three occasions over a five month period, involved such experiences as:

(1) Oral presentations about the content and pedagogy (current research) of the teaching and learning of writing with young children

(2) Case studies and video clips about pedagogy and practices relevant to children learning to write

(3) Examination of samples of students' work and teacher practices

While these types of experiences allowed for the dissemination of new knowledge, practices and ideas, their benefit to teachers' learning and influence on their classroom practices required that they be implemented together with opportunities for teachers to engage in *critical reflection*. Thus central to the experiences of the professional learning seminars was the practice of collegial discussion and critical reflection.

Table 4: Key experiences of professional learning seminars.

Presentations re content and pedagogy	Case studies video re pedagogy	Collaborative discussion and reflection
Sharing and recording ideas and understanding	Data analysis: children's writing	Independent written reflection

Interactive oral presentations

The first type of experience for supporting teachers' learning was an interactive oral presentation, the content of which was based on the initial findings about the teachers' needs and interests. There were three of these over the duration of the project; each was conducted by early childhood literacy specialists from Edith Cowan University and involved the oral presentation of current theoretical and pedagogical information about the teaching and learning of writing. Importantly, weaved into each presentation was the opportunity for teachers to discuss the information and to consider it in relation to their own teaching situations.

Presentation 1: How young children learn to write

The first of the presentations was about how young children learn to write. It included information about the aspects of learning (the knowledge, skills and understanding) important to children becoming writers and the classroom practices and strategies that support their learning and development (see Appendix 3). The presentation introduced and explained each of the following areas of learning important to children becoming writers:

- Understanding the communicative nature of written texts
- Understanding print and text concepts (the consistencies of print and texts)
- Oral language skill and competency (speaking and listening)
- Phonological awareness and phonemic awareness
- Knowledge of letters and an understanding of the alphabetic principle
- Knowledge about sound / symbol correspondence and skill of being able to encode words
- Fine motor coordination
- Symbolic thought
- One to one correspondence
- Self-regulation skills

After each area of learning was introduced and explained, participants talked in small groups to consider relevant practices. The presentation went on to outline pedagogy thus enhancing the participants' ideas before moving to the next area of learning. The key practices and experiences derived from teacher discussions as well as the presentation, built on their earlier identification of effective practices, and included:

- A print rich classroom environment (written texts in the classroom / school environment that serve real communicative purposes e.g. signs, labels, a reading corner and a well-resourced writing centre)
- The teaching strategies of modelled and shared writing (children need to observe teachers write and they need to create texts with the teacher) and Shared Reading and Language Experience Approach / Dictated Writing
- Authentic classroom writing experiences (have meaning in the lives of the children; integrated into the activities and routines of everyday classroom experiences; opportunities for children to experiment with writing)
- Writing opportunities embedded in play events – socio-dramatic play; learning centres
- Reader (audience) response for children's writing and teacher feedback that focuses on meaning (in relation to purpose and audience)
- Reading aloud to children
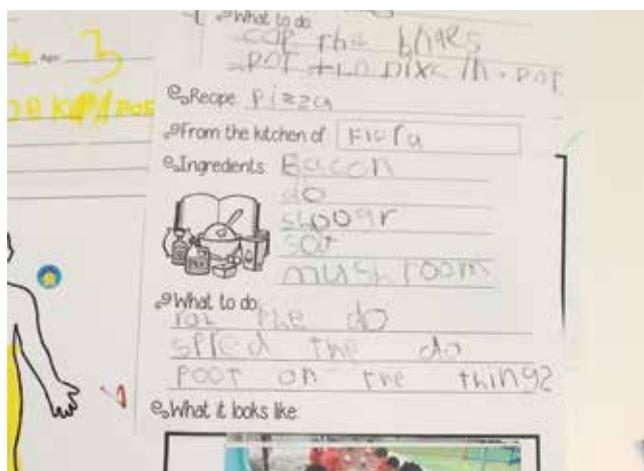
- Oral language experiences (models of spoken language, reading aloud to children, sustained dialogue, retells, socio-dramatic play, small group activities)
- Rhymes, songs, chants and word play games
- Multisensory activities that focus on sounds of language and words and use objects and pictures
- Play with letter tiles and plastic letters; make letters out of play dough and other materials; paint, draw and make collages of letters, games and puzzles
- The daily, explicit and systematic, multi-sensory experiences to teach, practise and reinforce phonemic awareness, letter knowledge, letter / sound correspondence and encoding.

Presentation 2: Factors that influence young children's motivation to write

The second presentation was about factors that influence young children's motivation to write. It provided participants with an overview of the current research about the circumstances that have bearing on young children's motivation and engagement with writing. Factors that are important to maintaining children's interest in and motivation for writing identified in the research were presented (Table 5).

The presentation about motivation for writing was combined with the 'jigsaw' learning technique whereby participants were placed in small groups with each member being allocated one factor of motivation for which they were responsible for learning about and then sharing with the rest of their group. Learning involved combining with others from other groups who shared the same topic / factor of motivation and reading and discussing the written information provided. Important to these discussions was the consideration of the connections between each factor of motivation and classroom practices.

Table 5: Factors that influence young children's motivation to write

1. Meaningful	Children need to understand that writing is a tool for expression and for communicating with others. They need to realise its worth to their own lives and to their social and relational needs (Magnifico, 2010; Bruning & Horn, 2000, Putman & Walker, 2010, Mata, 2014 & Troia, Harbaugh, Shankland, Wolbers & Lawrence, 2012).
2. Choice	Children require choice in the manner or topic of writing. They need to be interested in what they are writing about (Marinak, Gambrell & Mazzoni, 2012; Putman & Walker, 2010).
3. Recognition and feedback	The feedback that children receive about their writing needs to focus on communication success (the message conveyed) rather than on writing skill (Bruning & Horn, 2000; Nolen, 2007; Magnifico, 2010).
4. Self-efficacy	Children need to perceive themselves as writers and believe in their own competency. They should expect to succeed (Mata, 2014; Marinak, Gambrell & Mazzoni, 2012; Nolen, 2007; Bruner & Horn, 2000).
5. The emotional environment	The classroom writing climate needs to be one of trust, care and mutual concern (Bruning & Horn, 2000) and writing experiences should emphasise enjoyment. Cognitive and emotional supports during experiences of writing need to be provided (Bruning & Horn, 2000; Mata, 2014).

Teacher comments during these discussions highlighted the teachers' desire to make connections between theoretical knowledge and the practicalities of their own classrooms and their students' needs. Comments covered were thoughtful and widespread; in some instances, they clearly demonstrate teachers going through the process of adjusting their values and beliefs about what is important when teaching writing as exemplified by the following teacher comments about the practical implications of the research on motivation.

- Use of learning intentions (e.g. full stops and capital letters) that provide the teaching focus for classroom writing experiences influence the type of feedback provided
- Monitoring children's thinking in regards to their sense of writing competency as compared to their actual competency
- Acknowledgement of each student's voice by listening to their opinion and providing them with choice in regards to the writing they do
- Not focusing simply on what is being taught but on how we engage in conversation with students, the resources we use, the development of a pleasant classroom space and the intellectual and emotional support provided to each child
- Reconsideration of the expectations we have for the children
- Thinking more holistically as a space – step back to consider 'Is it important that this rule be met?' 'How will it affect the motivation of young children?'

- Along the way students have lost their understanding of reasons for writing and spelling became the focus. We need to show them [the children] that writing is about communication
- Creating time to simply be with the children, to play with them and model playfulness and being involved.
- Creating well-resourced spaces for free writing
- Maybe just prompt children with aspects of their writing rather than insist

Presentation 3: Children's literature: 'Read alouds' and language for writing

The third oral presentation focused on the topic of developing children's written language ability through use of children's literature and the read aloud strategy. The presentation focused on four important areas of learning and development for young, beginning and developing writers and how reading children's literature aloud provides an ideal context for their development. The four areas important to learning to write addressed in the presentation were:

- Learning about texts and written communication
- Developing oral language competency
- Semantic knowledge (schema development)
- Cognitive ability (thinking, recalling, imagining)

The presentation introduced participants to the strategies of 'Text Talk' (Lane & Wright, 2007), a vocabulary development strategy that involves children participating in dialogue using key words from the text and, 'Dialogic Reading' (Lane & Wright, 2007), a strategy that engages children in talk using the syntax and concepts featured in the 'read aloud' text.

It also presented ideas for using children's literature as a springboard for their written communication experiences.

Additional to the information presented and the participant discussions throughout the presentation, the following activities were carried out:

- Teachers identified new and interesting vocabulary in a text they might read to the children in their classes. They considered how they might introduce and teach the vocabulary during or after reading the text aloud and in doing so were mindful of important features of receptive and expressive vocabulary development, maximising exposure to target words and children's active use of target words in different talk contexts.
- Teachers considered how they might use the strategy of **dialogic reading** (Lane & Wright, 2007) to support the syntax and concept development of the children in their classes.
- Teachers brainstormed ideas for using a specific children's literature text as a springboard for writing experiences for the children they teach.

Case studies and video clips about classroom pedagogy and practice

Another source of learning for teachers was viewing and analysing video footage demonstrating teaching strategies and classroom practices for the teaching of writing in action. This type of experience was dispersed over the course of the professional learning and formed a core part of the seminar days. Each was chosen in relation to the participants' needs and interests and viewing was always followed by discussion with others for the purpose of considering the information presented in the video in light of their own classroom situations. The video clips incorporated into the professional learning were:

Video clip: 'The travel agent'

In this video clip children were engaged in socio-dramatic play in the classroom 'travel agent' centre. The focus was on the children's use of oral and written communication for authentic purposes as they took on roles and acted out scenarios relevant to the travel agent theme of the centre. In viewing the video clip, teachers were asked to consider the knowledge and understandings about written communication that the children were "trying out", demonstrating or learning and how these were facilitated by the socio-dramatic play.

Video clip: 'In the beginning: Young writers develop independence' (USA: Steinhouse Publishers)

This film depicts a pre-primary (US equivalent) teacher implementing one-to-one conferences with children about their writing. In doing so various practices and areas of learning are highlighted; these include:

- starting from where the child is at in terms of writing development
- using published texts and writing in the environment to teach about writing
- teaching about the title, author and illustrator
- writing as a form of communication: purposes and audiences (readers for writing)
- invented spelling
- assessment and record keeping in relation to children's writing skills
- writing experiences that accommodate children's interests and involve topics of relevance to their lives
- developing the content of written texts in relation to purpose.

At different episodes in the film, opportunities for discussion and for considering the content were provided. Use of the following discussion topics and questions supported this process:

- Discuss and devise a list of the range of skills and understandings about writing that the teacher was aiming to develop through her interactions with the children about their writing.
- Choose three practices that you observed and that you will implement in your classroom. Explain the reasons for your choices; that is, your understanding of the benefits of such practices.
- Consider the structure the teacher created in her classroom, the language she used and the expectations she conveyed to the children. How did each of these support the teacher's important goal of having the children see themselves as writers?
- What are your own expectations and how do you convey these to your students? How might you establish a context where your children view themselves as "real" writers / authors and where they use writing to communicate with others?

Video clip: 'The Zoo'

The main focus of this video clip was the children's excursion to the zoo and the oral and written texts that were integrated into this experience. Before viewing the film clip, the teachers were introduced to the notion of motivation and engagement as the focus for their attention and their observational lens was that of the children's motivation for the oral and written communication experiences that comprised their zoo outing and the features of the context that had bearing (Appendix 4).

After viewing the video clip the teachers worked in small groups to discuss their observations in light of the following key ideas:

- Nurturing functional beliefs about writing
- Fostering engagement through authentic writing goals and contexts
- Providing a supportive context for writing
- Creating a positive emotional environment

Video clip: 'Modelled Writing' (UK National Strategy)

This video depicts a teacher implementing a shared writing lesson with a class of beginning writers. It demonstrates techniques that can be used to develop children's understanding of the alphabetic principle and concepts of print and of other foundational understandings about written communication, as well as the skill of encoding and other practices relevant to beginning writing. In viewing the video the teachers noted and later discussed the techniques used by the teacher and the children's role.

Examining samples of students' writing and reflecting on teaching practices

There were different occasions during the seminars when the participants' learning was enhanced through the examination of samples of children's writing and their own teaching practices. On some occasions the writing samples were provided but for the most part the teachers sourced the written texts of the students they teach.

Teachers' feedback about children's writing:

On this occasion samples of students' writing with different feedback comments from teachers were provided; typically the feedback comments were about the surface features of the student's writing (for example, the spelling, punctuation, sentence structures and word spacing) but they also included comments made in response to the message or the communicative intent of the written text. Teachers worked in small groups to examine the different feedback comments, determine the message about writing embedded in each and consider the implications of each type of comment. The emphasis was on determining how feedback might address a broad range of important perspectives about writing and the potency of comments teachers might provide their students in response to the written texts they create. The following two specific questions directed the group discussions:

- What message does each type of teacher response (feedback) provide the children about written communication?
- What theory of teaching / learning is indicative of each type of feedback?

The teachers then considered how they respond to their own students' written texts and whether or not they provide certain types of feedback more than other types. They considered the implications of their own feedback comments and the implicit message they were giving their students about what is important to the act of writing. The questions that directed reflection were:

- In what ways do you respond to or provide feedback for your children's writing?
- What are the purposes of the responses you provide?
- What do your responses say about what you value in relation to children's writing and to the various aspects of written communication?
- What are the implications for the type of feedback you provide?
- Do the children respond to each other's writing?
- How might you expand on the ways that you respond to your children's writing?

The teachers discussed the notion of feedback for children's writing, their own feedback for writing practices and the influence different types of feedback have on children's understanding of and motivation for writing. They thought about and critically analysed their own actions. The following comments from these discussions demonstrate the range of ideas discussed and the level of reflection in which they engaged:

Children know; they know when you don't mean it. It needs to be authentic feedback.

I try to choose one aspect rather than underline everything – tell them what was great about it rather than just say, 'great'.

Make it an acceptable form of communication in itself … this also invites them to respond to your comment which highlights that [writing] is a form of communication.

You shouldn't write directly on the paper but rather on post-it notes.

Respond directly to what the child has said [written] in a conversational way.

Should we ask children for permission [to write on their work]?

Our words are a reflection of us.

The writing audit

The teachers carried out a writing audit (AISWA, n.d.) (Appendix 5) for which they kept an ongoing record of the writing experiences with which their students engaged over a period of time. This comprised noting information about the nature of each writing experience; for instance, the initiator (teacher, child, other), the links between the writing and other learning experiences or topics and the purpose and audience for the writing task. The information that emerged from the audit became the basis of a seminar activity where teachers discussed their findings relative to their understanding about the teaching and learning of writing and considered other possibilities for children's experience of writing.

On another occasion the teachers considered and wrote about the features of one writing experience in which the students in their classes had recently engaged (Appendix 6). The features documented were done so in response to the following questions:

- For what communicative purpose did the children write?
- Who was the 'audience' for the children's writing?
- If it was a teacher initiated writing experience, what occurred for the children to lead them into writing to communicate?
- What was the role of the teacher as the children wrote?

Samples of writing from the described experience were gathered and analysed together with the attributes of the actual writing experience and shared and discussed with others in the group.

Assessment of students' writing and the SCSA pre-primary English assessment pointers

Assessment of children's learning and development in relation to written communication was addressed during the final seminar day. For this purpose the teachers used current samples of their students' writing and individually reflected on and wrote about their wonderings in relation to their students writing competency and achievements. Following this they used the WA School Curriculum and Standards Authority (SCSA) pre-primary English assessment pointers rubric (Appendix 7) to determine where students' writing samples demonstrate the different standards of achievement for each of the criteria of the rubric. They subsequently worked in groups to discuss findings and critique the practical application of the assessment rubric.

Afterwards the teachers used the iceberg as an analogy for writing learning and development (Figure 3). They recorded on the iceberg above the waterline those aspects of writing competency that can be determined by observation of children's written texts (skills) and those not readily determined from such an analysis below the waterline. The point of the exercise was for teachers to review the knowledge, skills and understanding important to learning to write and to consider the need to go beyond the writing sample to gain a comprehensive picture of children's writing development.

Figure 3: Icebergs as an analogy for writing learning and development
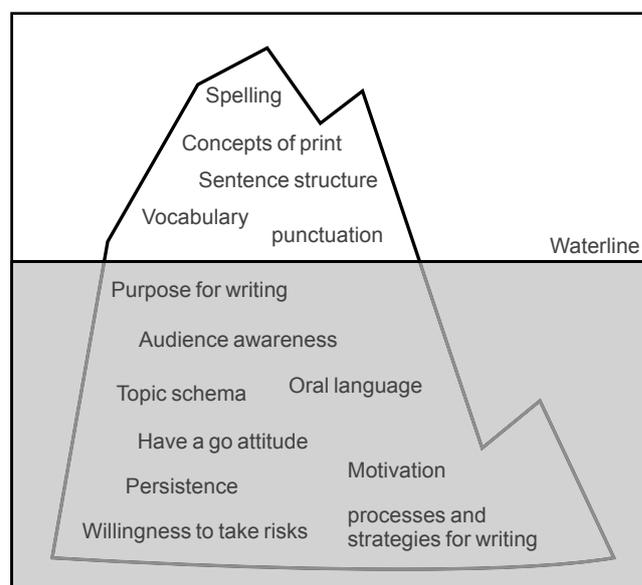
The writing survey: Children's thoughts about writing (Appendix 8)

(Adapted with permission from: Byrnes & Brown. (2007).)

One of the early activities of the professional learning experience was a writing survey (adapted from Melbourne Graduate School of Education) which teacher participants conducted with the children in their classes. It comprised the following questions:

- Do you like writing or having a go at writing things?
- Do you like doing this by yourself or with someone else? If someone else, who?
- Is there somewhere special you like to go to write e.g. in the writing corner / at home in the kitchen?
- What kinds of things do you particularly like to write there?
- Do you like to choose the things you write? e.g. write your name
- Do you think it is a good idea to learn to write? If yes, why? What's good about learning to write?
- Are you looking forward to learning to write lots of different words?
- Who is teaching you to write? What do they do? How do they teach you?
- Did (will) you have to do anything special to help yourself learn to write?
- If yes, what did (will) you do?
- Was (Is) it going to be easy for you to learn to write?
- Why do you think that?
- What if it is hard? What will adults do?
- What will you do?
- Now (When) you have learnt to write, what kinds of things will (do) you be able to write?
- Do you think you are (will be) good at writing?
- Is there something you always like to write e.g. your name on birthday cards? If yes, what?

The survey data from the teachers was collectively analysed for the purpose of identifying trends in relation to the children's understanding of written communication and their attitudes and ideas about learning to write and classroom writing experiences. The information gleaned was presented to teachers and it provided them with another basis for considering their classroom practices and pedagogy.


Teacher: *When you have learnt to write, what kinds of things will you be able to write?*

Child: *Tricky words, really hard words, easy words. I might be able to read someone's mind.*

An examination of the data (Figure 4) showed that a significant 90% of the children liked writing or having a go at writing; however, only seventy-five percent believed that learning to write was going to be an easy task; for these children confidence about learning to write could primarily be attributed to their faith in the relationship between effort and success (23%), a belief in their current writing competency (15%) or simply that they enjoyed writing (10%). Twenty-six percent of the children who believed learning to write was going to be an easy task, could not articulate their reasons.

Figure 4: The writing survey: Children's thoughts about writing.

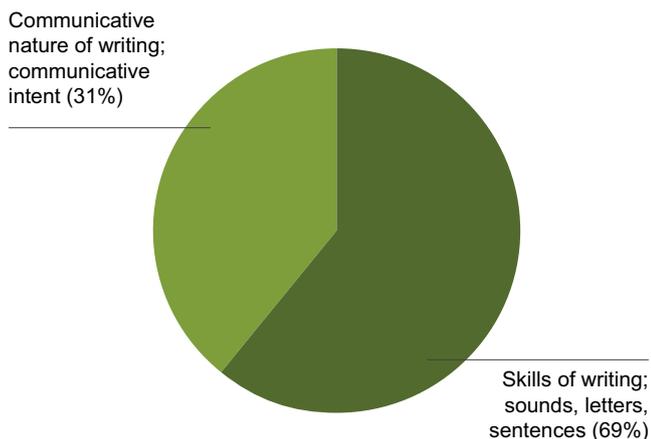**Do you like writing or having a go at writing things?**
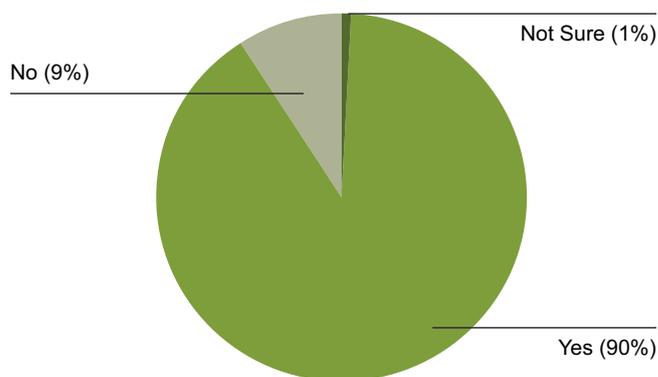
Is (was) it going to be easy for you to learn to write?
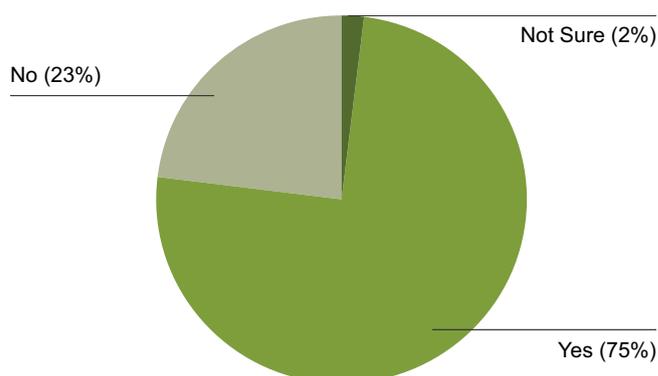
Just as interesting was the information pertaining to the twenty-three percent of children who were not convinced that learning to write was going to be an easy exercise. Reasons cited by these children were the difficulty of the task of writing (37%), a concern about making mistakes (12%) and, left-handedness (6%). Other children were not able to articulate their reasons.

There were diverse results in relation to the survey question about what children will do and what adults (teachers, parents) will do for them if they face difficulties while learning to write. Twenty-three percent of the children would ask [adults] for help if they faced difficulties with writing. Other children would copy (10%), practise (8%), learn, think or watch. Twenty-eight percent of the children would deal with things by themselves, suggesting strategies they might use. In regards to the assistance from adults 33% of the children believed that when they faced difficulties with writing adults would tell them what to write and what letters to write to spell a word. Others believed that the teacher would do their writing for them but for the majority it was simply that they would 'help' or 'teach'. Significant to these results is the perception that the difficulties are to do with the encoding aspect of writing.

Figure 5: The writing survey: Children's thoughts about writing.

Communicative nature of writing; communicative intent (31%)

Skills of writing; sounds, letters, sentences (69%)

Responses pertaining to the survey question about what children would write once they had learnt how, were of a similar nature in that they were mostly about being able to write different words and letters (52%). Only 11% of the children revealed awareness of the communicative purpose of writing when responding to this question; from these children, such things as letters, lists, cards, notes and recounts were cited.

The information that surfaced from the surveys became the topic of a seminar workshop. Together teachers reflected on their survey revelations; that is, the students' understanding and thoughts about writing and learning to write. They identified commonly held attitudes, celebrated the positives and sought to determine the implications and possible ways to respond.

The teachers' response to the revelations afforded by the survey was positive in that they recognised its expediency in bringing to light information that they might otherwise not have uncovered. This is illustrated when one teacher stated,

What I thought my children knew and enjoyed about writing was not what they knew and enjoyed about writing and suddenly I had this moment of, 'What can I do about that?' and then doing the readings and finding out what was actually available from what had been given, gave me tremendous empowerment as a teacher to go back and create environments where children wanted to write.

In doing the survey a second time at the end of the project and comparing results with those gained on the first occasion, the teachers were provided with evidence of the effect of the changes they made to their practices for teaching writing. Example of this is provided from the following teacher comments when discussing the survey results.

A lot of them said, 'I can write cards for people when it's their birthday,' 'I can write invitations to my party,' whereas before they'd been like, 'I'll know all the letters and I'll be able to write words.'

What I also found is that the children's perspective of me has changed … of who I am in the classroom and it came through in their voice, their child voice what I was doing and one little boy, he listed all the things that we've done, including things like celebrating their writing and the skills … and then right at the end he said, 'You've just got it so right. You've taught me everything I need to know and now I can write.'

I found lots [of children] this time instead of saying things like, 'I will learn how to write words like 'dog', which they had said the first time, said things like, 'I will be able to write letters.' 'I will be able to write a newspaper,' 'I will be able to write …' and I was like, 'Oh, thank goodness.'
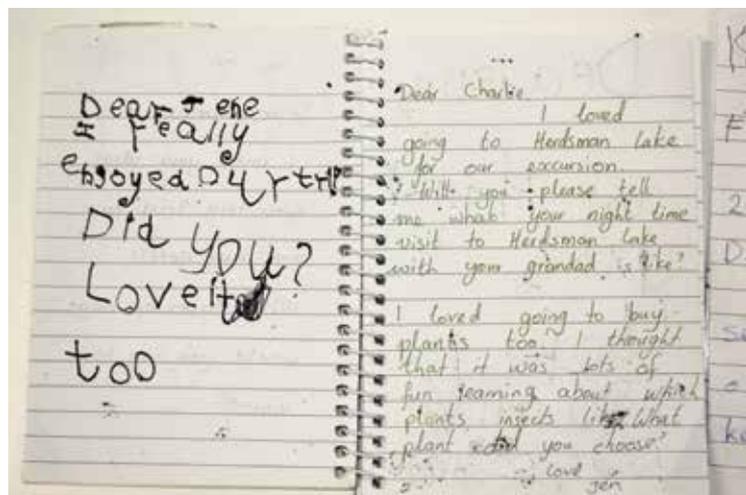
Collaborative group discussion and reflection

Central to supporting the teachers to improve their practice and to enhance their students' learning was the opportunity for them to work together. The seminar days of the project involved teachers regularly engaging in collaborative interactions around topics covered which involved them in sharing understandings and issues, expressing opinions, confronting difficulties and giving positive and constructive feedback to each other. Importantly, they considered the experiences of the seminar days in relation to their own classroom situations and practice and they worked collaboratively to improve their practice and enhance their students' learning. In essence, the teachers who participated in the professional learning project became part of a learning community and, as the research explains, learning communities as part of teacher professional learning support the development of teacher confidence, belief in their power to make a difference to students' learning and a greater commitment to changing practice and trying things out (Earley & Porritt, 2009; Stoll, Bolam, McMahon, Wallace, & Thomas, 2006)

Moreover, the group discussions emphasised reflective practice whereby the teachers thought about and critically analysed student data, teaching methods and the results of new practices or changes made. As explained by Hedberg (2009) reflection gives "learning a space to be processed, understood, and more likely integrated into future thoughts and actions" (p.11).

A framework for considering reflective learning (Hedberg, 2009) provided the source for different types of reflection with each serving a different learning purpose; that is, reflection for clarification, for practical application and for questioning one's own assumptions and beliefs (Table 6).

3. The professional reading

The development of teachers' theoretical and pedagogical knowledge about the teaching and learning of writing was further supported through personal reading and, for this purpose teachers were assigned research articles or text book chapters chosen for their relevance to their interests and needs. In most instances, the readings were accompanied by supplementary reflection activities which directed teachers to glean relevant information and to make connections between the information presented and their teaching situations. An example of a reflection activity is shown below. It was used in conjunction with the research article, which is about writing and motivation. The following readings were provided:

Article 1: Action research: Improving schools and empowering educators (Mertler, 2012)

The author introduces educators to action research and outlines the steps involved in the action research process which carefully integrate opportunities for reflective practice.

Article 2: Writing in early childhood classrooms: Guidance for best practices (Gerde, Bingham & Wasik, 2012)

In this article the authors present and explain twelve effective practices for laying the foundations for children's learning to write. The emphasis is on ensuring multiple opportunities for children's learning in relation to written communication and for these opportunities to be appropriate to young children and how they best learn. The authors particularly highlight the importance of teachers modelling writing and the provision of writing experiences that are made integral to children's play. The importance of a print rich environment is also emphasised.

Table 6: Three types of teacher reflection (Hedberg, 2009).

Subject Reflective Learning	This is about thinking for the purpose of clarification. It allows for deeper understanding of and better insights about a focus topic, idea, concept or theory.	What am I learning about this topic? What practical ways could I apply understanding of this topic to my teaching / my students learning?
Personal Reflective Learning	This is about applying what has been learned to own lives (as teachers) and noting its effect and relevance. This type of reflection should lead to better self-understanding and self-awareness. Assists to acquire insights about beliefs and assumptions that influence approach.	What am I learning about myself as a teacher as I learn about the subject?
Critical Reflective Learning	This is about questioning personal assumptions, beliefs, and commonly accepted ideas. It supports informed action by having them investigate assumptions and the forces that shape their decision making and behaviour.	What practices are shaped by my beliefs? Are there other ideas and beliefs about this topic?

The twelve key practices discussed in the article are:

- Building writing into the daily schedule
- Accepting all forms of writing
- Explicitly modelling writing
- Scaffolding children's writing
- Encouraging children to read what they write
- Encouraging invented spelling
- Making writing opportunities meaningful
- Having writing materials in all centres
- Displaying topic-related words in the writing centre
- Engaging in group writing experiences
- Family involvement
- Using technology to support writing

The teachers were provided with an accompanying reflection activity for this article (Appendix 9). It necessitated that they:

- use the twelve effective practices (from the article) as the criteria to review and evaluate their classroom learning environment and their practices for teaching writing and determine where they might be wanting in regards to each of the twelve practices.
- establish goals in relation to the changes they would make to their classroom practices and environment and to implement these changes.
- appraise each of the changes they make in terms of their observations about how each has affected children's engagement and learning in regards to writing.

Additionally, the article provided the impetus for a seminar day activity whereby the teachers worked in groups to discuss those points of the article they felt were most relevant to their teaching situations and to share three things they have done or changed in their practices (or plan to) as a consequence of reading the article.

Article 3: Developing Motivation to Write (Bruning & Horn, 2000).

This article presents an examination of issues relevant to children's motivation for written communication. The authors outline some commonly held assumptions about writing development and learning to do with teacher beliefs about writing, the need for children to experience writing as purposeful and to see it as an authentic form of communication. In addition, they emphasise the importance of teacher knowledge about the relationship between oral language and learning to communicate in writing. The reading also describes a framework of factors important to the development and maintenance of children's motivation to write.

The teachers were provided with an accompanying reflective activity (Appendix 10) whereby they were directed to consider the information presented in relation to their classroom practices for the teaching of writing and asked to consider any changes they might make to their classroom practices as a result of the information presented in the article.

The article provided the impetus for a seminar day activity whereby the teachers worked in groups to discuss the ideas about motivation presented in the article, to determine four key ideas from the article and to explore their own classroom practicalities for motivation and writing.

Table 7: Extract from reflective sheet that accompanied Article 3

| Factors	Key Points and Important Practices	Application to your classroom practices
Nurturing Functional Beliefs About Writing [pp. 28-29]		
Fostering Student Engagement Through Authentic Writing Goals and Contexts [pp. 30-31]		
Providing a Supportive Context for Writing [pp. 31-33]		
Creating a Positive Emotional Environment [pp. 33-34]		

4. The classroom based data collection

The project involved the teachers in collecting information about their students writing competency, knowledge of and attitude to writing and this was often used as the basis for teachers' learning by means of discussions and reflections during the seminar days. The teachers were able to develop a better understanding of the ways in which they might enhance their teaching of writing when it was based on what they learned from information gathered about their students' needs. The data teachers collected and analysed over the duration of the project included:

- Answers to questions about writing and learning to write (Survey: "What do children think about writing?")
- Writing experiences in which the children in their class engage (Writing audit)
- Features of the context of some example writing lessons
- Students written texts
- Students' interest in and engagement with written communication and classroom writing experiences
- Data pertaining to their individual action research project.

5. Teacher action research

Another component of the professional learning project was the teachers' individual action research projects for which they investigated their practices for teaching writing and their students' learning. They used observation, interviews, conversations and analysis of samples of writing to ascertain students' learning and development as well as their engagement with and attitude towards writing and the writing experiences of the classroom.

Figure 6: The Action Research Spiral (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005).
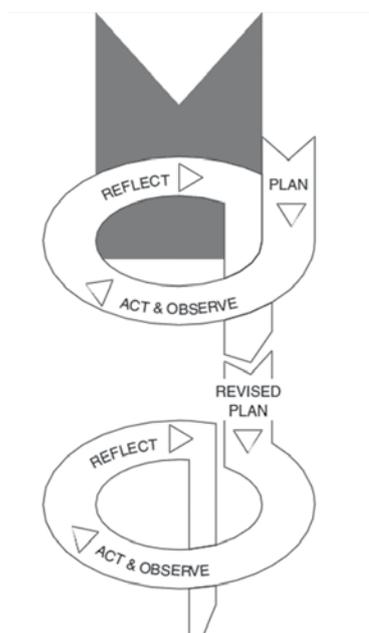
The process which was supported through seminar experiences involved teachers in selecting a topic focus and formulating an inquiry question and then collecting, analysing and interpreting data that served to provide the rationale for their inquiry and to achieve deeper understanding of the need or issue to be addressed. Teachers considered their findings in the context of the theoretical and pedagogical knowledge gained through other experiences of the project and through their personal research. The insights garnered offered the platform for their plan of action. Teachers devised and implemented action plans and evaluated their effectiveness. The essential steps of the action research were:

1. Articulate an issue, a problem or a point of conjecture in relation to their classroom situation associated with the teaching and learning of writing

2. Gather and analyse information in order to better understand the identified issue, problem or point of conjecture

3. Draw on available resources (seminar knowledge-input sessions, personal reading and discussions with other teachers) to extend understanding about the ways in which an issue, problem or point of conjecture might be addressed and to devise an appropriate course of action

4. Implement new strategies or practices

5. Evaluate the consequences of doing things differently and share them with other teachers during seminar workshop sessions; consider the process of change in the personal learning journal.

The model of action research as devised by Kemmis & McTaggart (2005) was used to support teachers in learning about and understanding the processes involved in action research. This model emphasises the multiple cycles of research and action (Figure 6) that define teacher action research and the importance of individual and group reflective practises for making adaptions for each new cycle. The steps which are adapted from Kemmis & McTaggart (2005) are outlined in Table 8.

Table 8: Teacher Action Research (adapted from Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005).

Step	Think	Do
STEP 1 **OBSERVE AND REFLECT**	• What is it that I will change or have a go at doing? • What was I doing that I thought I would like to change?	• Observe / think about your teaching and the children learning • Gather and analyse data that reveals a need for change or improvement • Write about your current practice and teaching situation
STEP 2 **PLAN FOR IMPROVEMENT**	• What can be done? • How will you do it? • How will you evaluate the changes you make?	• Write down what you want to change or improve • Find out about and list possible strategies for addressing the area of need • Write your plan of action and methods to be used for evaluating its effectiveness
STEP 3 **ACT AND OBSERVE**	• What will you do? • What will you use to record your work (e.g. learning journal)?	• Implement your plan of action • Collect data along the way and keep records of what happens
STEP 4 **EVALUATE, REFLECT, SHARE**	• How will you evaluate and reflect on your outcomes? • What methods will you use to present the information? • Who will you share it with and how will you gather their feedback and reflections?	• Write about the methods you will use to evaluate and reflect on the outcomes • Decide how you will present the information about your action research • Consider possible audiences for sharing with and receiving feedback from
STEP 5 **GOING FURTHER** **(next spiral of action research)**	• How will you build the shared responses in your plan of action? • How will you demonstrate valuing the opinion / feedback of others? • How will you document your classroom inquiry story?	• Write your adjusted / refined plan of action that incorporates evaluation and reflection and feedback from others • Document your action research story

The teachers were afforded a range of supports for their action research projects, the most substantial of which seemed to be the opportunity to share and discuss ideas with each other. They were able to collaborate during seminar sessions to share their inquiry experiences and exchange knowledge and ideas with respect to the teaching of writing and student learning in this area. They were able to question each other and help each other to gain deeper insights about their situations and determine how issues might be addressed.

During the introductory seminar in May, the teachers were provided with an overview of the ideologies and practices of action research and the steps involved in carrying out an action research project. They were also provided with reading material from *Action Research: Improving Schools and Empowering Educators (Mertler, 2012)* that conveyed a practical understanding of classroom action research methods. Additionally, other seminars afforded teachers the time to collaborate on their action research projects, to share progress, discuss ideas and experiences and address issues. Small groups of teachers got together to share their inquiry experiences, exchange knowledge with respect to the teaching of writing and student learning in this area. They questioned each other and helped each other to gain deeper insights about their situations and to determine how issues might be addressed.

Each teacher was asked to develop a question from their initial exploration in their action research project area. The questions developed included:

- How can I develop a culture of writing to create engagement and joy?
- How can I help students to perceive themselves as authors and engage in authentic writing tasks?
- How can I use play to engage my reluctant writers to be intrinsically motivated to write?
- How can I use socio-dramatic play to encourage students to be involved in experimental writing?
- How can I motivate my students to write and help them see themselves as writers?
- How can I develop a writing culture in the classroom?
- How can I create meaningful writing experiences for the students?
- How can I promote emergent writing with the pre-school students in my class?
- How can I use varied levelled strategies to get students to be independent writers?
- How can I motivate my students to engage in writing experiences?
- How can I change students' perceptions of and engagement in writing?
- How can I change students' attitudes towards writing?
- How can I put writing into the classroom culture?
- How do I facilitate independent writing through directive teaching and the students own experiences?

6. Personal reflection and learning journals

The professional learning project was, to a large extent, a personal journey for each of the teachers who participated. Each teacher had their own learning and development requirements, their own unique class of children with different learning to write needs and their own issues to be addressed and interests to follow. And so for the entirety of the professional learning project the teachers kept a written journal in which they considered the process and outcomes of their learning. The journals were to become stories of their professional growth and change whereby they described, analysed and reflected on experiences, events, issues and practices, noted change and improvement and highlighted clarifications and new understandings.

Mariko (2011) describes the benefits of learning journals, suggesting the journaling process leads to teachers becoming reflective, critical and constructive learners and to being able to examine and understand their experiences in more profound ways. Clarke (2004) further highlights the benefit to teachers of the journal writing process. She describes journals as an effective way to promote critical reflection, links between theory and practice and self-evaluation of teaching performance all of which facilitate professional learning and development.

Like many other experiences of the professional learning project, the journals were to support teachers growth as teachers of early writing by developing their self-awareness about the nature and impact of what they do and their ability to integrate new information and ideas into their practice.

7. Determining effectiveness

The effectiveness of the project, *Reflective Practice with Teachers of Early Writers* was largely determined by the data derived from the focus group discussions held at the conclusion of the project. Participants shared their reflections on their participation in the project and how it had affected their understanding, thinking and classroom practice. The teachers described their learning and discussed key experiences that shaped their learning. They shared the ways in which they were able to transfer their learning to the classroom situation and how it had influenced their students' engagement with classroom writing as well as their development as writers. As teachers talked about the different strategies and practices they were implementing in the classroom and about changes observed in their students' writing skills, behaviours or attitudes it became apparent that they had gained from the professional learning experiences of the project.

Additional data pertaining to the effectiveness of the project was gained from small group discussions where teachers brainstormed ideas in response to the question, "What am I now doing in my classroom that works?"
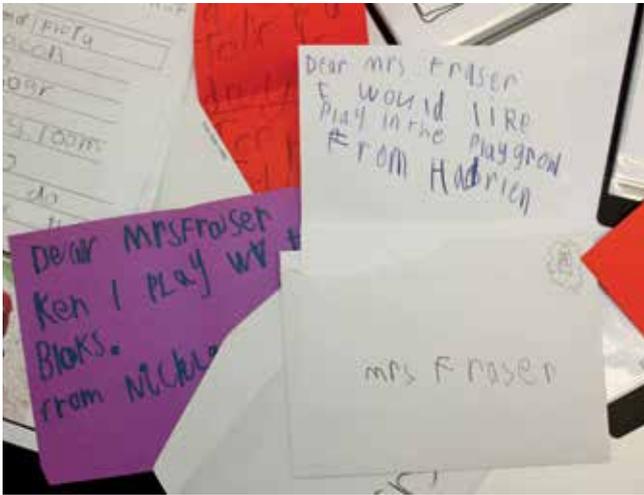
Reflective practice to enhance learning

A significant goal of the project was to enhance teachers' capacity for the type of reflective practice that is important to effectively address the learning needs of the children they teach. That the teachers engaged reflectively with the different components of the professional learning project and in such a way as to influence their learning and professional growth was made apparent from an analysis of the focus group discussions at the conclusion of the project. The teacher comments frequently demonstrated the reflective quality of their engagement in the learning process; for instance:

- *So yes, the light bulb came on and I was like, 'Right.' That was the answer that I'd been actually looking for because there'd been this constant struggle between the two the whole time.*

- *And suddenly I had this moment of, 'What can I do about that?'*

- *I have thought a lot about how I can change …*

- *My thinking has changed with regard to children's writing.*

- *It's made me kind of step back and …*

- *It [the professional learning project] made me a lot more reflective about my planning and my practice.*

- *I really enjoyed coming to these sessions and tackling the problem that I might have faced in my classroom.*

- *I went away and really reflected upon this and actually what ended up happening was …*

- *So it was real food for thought re my practice of what I can do to help them.*

- *… the discussion about being explicit about the purpose of writing, that wasn't really something I had thought too much about before this course.*

- *… that wasn't really something I had thought too much about before this course. That certainly made a big change.*

New knowledge, understanding and classroom practice

Moreover, there was strong evidence of the project's bearing on the development of teachers' knowledge and understanding about the teaching and learning of writing and the application of new knowledge to the classroom; that teachers adapted their classroom practices and tried out new ones for the purpose of progressing their students' learning was apparent. The teachers habitually commented on the changes made to their thinking and practice as a result of their involvement in the project. Examples of such comments are:

- *There's been a big change in my behaviour in the classroom.*

- *I think my focus has really changed … I've shifted from focusing on learning the sounds and reading and writing to having more meaningful and authentic experiences for us to learn in.*

- *It's made me kind of step back and forget about the structure to a certain extent, go with the child's interest and be more spontaneous in the classroom.*

- *I'm more open to the children's ideas, using their ideas rather than me initiating the writing all the time. They have choice about what they write about. Whereas before they'd just write about on the weekend, it was the same old.*

- *I feel like I'm more open to if someone wants to include writing in their games or something I always make sure I give it my time because it can be time consuming to do that but I always try and make sure that I do prioritise these experiences.*

- *I came into this and I still had the idea of it had to be all building blocks, they had to know their letters and their sounds before they could even start writing. Now I've got a greater appreciation for … actually accepting what they create, what they see as writing.*

- *My whole attitude towards writing has changed. I've had such a great reading focus in my classroom that I'd partly forgotten about writing … now it's part of my everyday practice.*

- *So my thinking's changed. I think I've got a higher expectation of what the children are capable of. There were certainly some children in the class that I had a fairly accurate expectation and there were some that have just blown me away this term.*

- *My perception of how they actually engage [in writing] has changed … after taking a step back and not imposing so much, I've realised that they actually do a lot of writing.*
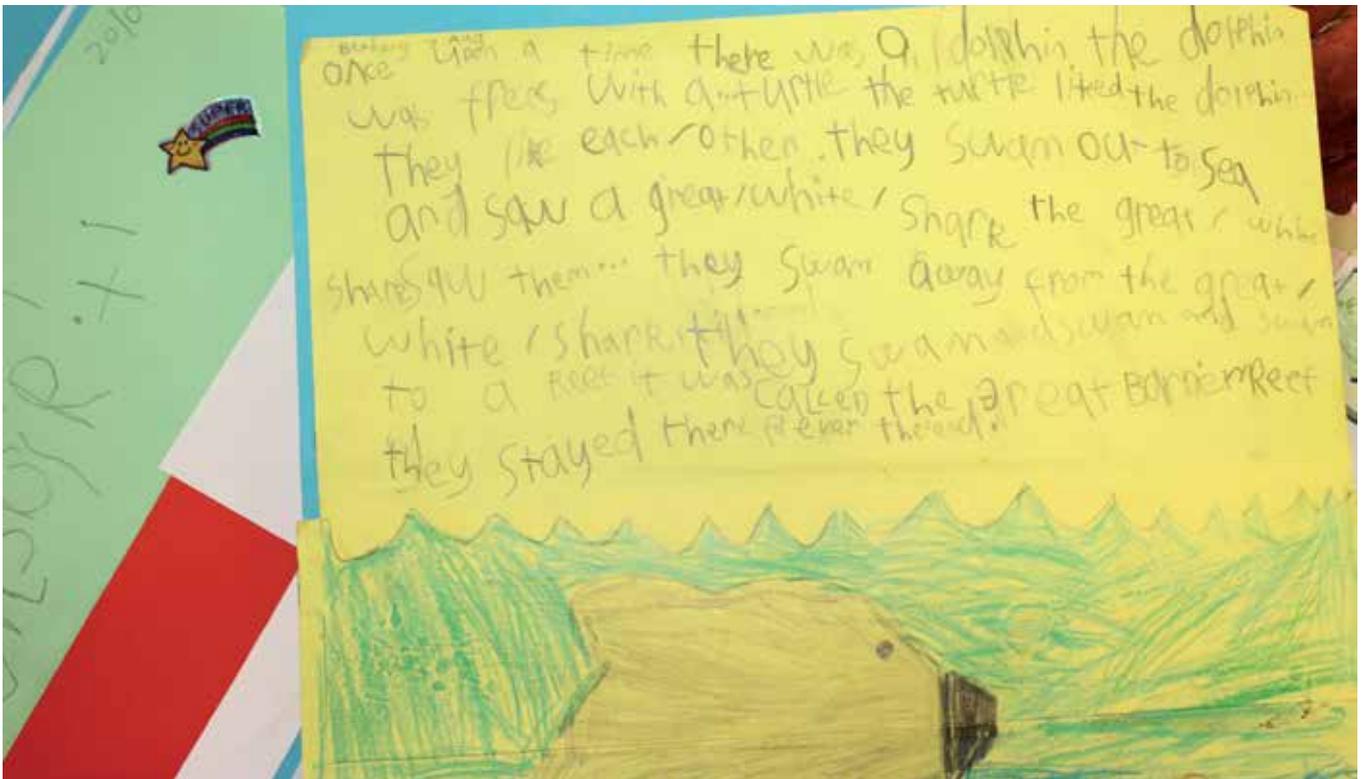
Enhanced focus on the communicative nature of writing

One important area of teacher change was in relation to classroom practices that support children to understand the communicative nature of writing. Many teachers highlighted this as an important area of change; for some it was simply about making the writing purposes clearer (for example, "I'm placing more importance on explicitly explaining the purpose of writing now than I did before"). For others it went a little further in that it was about adapting classroom experiences so as to ensure the children wrote for authentic communicative purposes (for example, "I try to put a purposeful reason for writing in every area of the classroom").

Some teachers spoke of a shift in their emphasis from the skills of writing to the *communicative purposes for writing*. Of interest are teachers' observations of the effect this shift in emphasis had on the children's attitude to and engagement with writing. As noted by one teacher, "There's a real buzz in the classroom because they see themselves as authors."

The following classroom anecdote emphasises another outcome resulting from the shift in emphasis from the skills of the task to the communicative intent.

"It's made me kind of step back and forget about the structure to a certain extent, go with the child's interest and be more spontaneous in the classroom."

So it started with a discussion that we had about signs and what signs were for, and then one of the boys wrote a sign asking children not to touch his work and wrote labels for his work so the other children could see what each part of his diorama was, and then a lot of the children have done something similar to that and starting to realise now that writing is for communication not just necessarily copying.

Responding to students writing; providing feedback

It would seem that for a few teachers one important focus for the teaching and learning of writing became that of the idea of providing children with feedback about their writing. The noted changes as a result of their involvement in the project included:

- Celebrate small achievements
- Have the child read his / her writing aloud to the teacher
- Respond to the message of the child's writing
- Respect the child as author and ask for permission to write on his / her text
- Provide precise feedback as opposed to vague comments such as 'great'
- Carry out a conversation with a child about his / her writing
- Provide opportunities for the children to respond to each other's writing
- Negotiate with the children an area of writing improvement to be targeted; use this as a basis for one type of feedback

The following story demonstrates one teacher's change in relation to the topic of writing feedback and response while also demonstrating the powerful effect of her ability to reflect critically in relation to one of the seminar day experiences.

I took on that [topic] you know, when we looked at the feedback that you would give on a child's writing. I was probably a little bit embarrassed. I thought, 'Oh my gosh, I'm probably like those terrible teachers that … I thought I was a terrible teacher, not crossing out but writing the correct word over the top and focusing on that kind of thing. I've really made it a mission to … just to listen to the children and have them read it [their writing] back to me and just focus on the message that they're giving me and what they've done rather than all the skills … just to give them feedback … whether it be written feedback on their work … but to ask permission, 'May I … I'm so pleased with this. May I write something on it?' and, 'Let me tell you what I'm writing,' so they can see why. It won't just be, 'Great story,' It might be, 'I really liked how you did this,' or, 'I really liked how the little girl went on the slide,' or, 'I wonder what other things she'll go on in the playground next?' – just to try to initiate a little bit more conversation or perhaps get them to write back … the next bit of their story or the next idea that they had. That's been a big thing for me; to just relinquish a bit of control, I think.

More opportunities for writing

The influence of the project on the teachers' classroom practices and pedagogy for writing encompassed a range of areas. The data suggests that the most prevalent change was in relation to creating more opportunities for children to write; this included incorporating writing opportunities in socio-dramatic play and other learning centres. Some teachers noted the effect of the simple act of creating more writing spaces and materials in the classroom environment and ensuring that learning spaces were imbued with opportunities for children to write. As one teacher stated, "It [writing] has just become part of their play now and they love to show what they've done … they've become a lot more confident [with writing] in this last term". Other teachers' comments also highlight the attention given to the establishment of more opportunities for children to write.

I've just put more writing tools in every learning centre.

I think I've given the children a sense of freedom to be able to write and not rush their writing. They can leave their writing out now and come back to it later in the day, come back to it.

What has made the difference? – writing every day.

My thinking has changed with regard to children's writing. We used to do journal writing once a week on a Monday; we now do it five days a week.

You can get just as much writing, in fact, probably more writing from the children if you put it into an area where they're playing and they're engaged and they want to write about it.

The following two teacher stories highlight taking this one step further by providing the children with the freedom to set-up the socio-dramatic play centre and use materials more flexibly.

This term we've had two different play areas … so the kids really were involved in that – making lists about what we could put in there and then we made that and had lots of writing opportunities in that.

… Before the play area was set-up by myself and was all my ideas. Whereas I think the children are taking the learning back into their own hands … they all seem to give us what they want to see and what writing materials they want to add to it … and frequently they'll say, 'Well, there's this paper in the writing corner that I want to use in the family corner,' and they'll go and get it now and add it to their playing, which is quite exciting.

And for another teacher, benefit was derived, not just by making writing materials available but also, from being more involved in the children's play, as noted:

I found that if I'm putting a lot more things around in different areas of play as well but it's been really important for me to spend the time actually playing in that area with the children and modelling new ways [to use the writing materials]. Once they got used to using the writing implements in there for me to be in there and play and find out how I could extend them a little bit further, and I can't really do that unless I'm in there listening or playing with them to find out what their interests are to help tweak the play to give it a little bit more.

Creating authentic opportunities for children to write

Linked to teachers increasing opportunities for the children to write was their consideration for the authenticity of the writing opportunities; that is, that provisions were made for children to write about what interested them. For many teachers the authenticity of the writing experiences became an important focus for the changes they made to their practices for the teaching of writing and for the children's learning as substantiated in the following teacher reflections.

… providing locations for writing so based on a book or little cards with pictures or experiences that they've had like a trip to the post box, or blowing bubbles in the playground, or perhaps they saw a different bug on the playground, or whatever it is that comes up during the day to talk about.

I'm more open to the children's ideas, using their ideas rather than me initiating the writing all the time. They have choice about what they write about. Whereas before they'd just write about on the weekend, it was the same old.

… because the writing activities that we do are more catered to their interests and they can bring their own to it.

It was all theirs. It was all theirs. I did do a guided writing session before that and I just went through, 'Okay, on my menu I could have chicken and it would cost $2.00', and I actually put prices on it but the kids didn't see that as an essential part, obviously, of a menu and the menus that they created was just a list of foods that they could have. And that was fine.

Other classroom practices for children's writing development as shaped by the project and adopted by teachers were that of modelled writing and talk for writing. As noted by one teacher, "I think I've been modelling writing more since coming here", and others, "It's letting the kids talk during the writing; sharing the ideas", " … and there's more talk about writing around the table and sharing of ideas."

Growth in students' writing competency, self-efficacy and engagement

The focus group discussion also revealed the teachers' observations about their students' increased confidence, competency and interest in writing and accordingly, their willingness to write and that they saw this as being a consequence of the changes they had made to their practices for the teaching of writing. As noted by one teacher, "They will purposefully seek out opportunities to write" and by another, "It's just become part of their play now and they love to show what they've done", and finally, "I can see the growth. [Previously] the growth was really slow but now, I mean … a huge difference..." Perhaps one teacher sums it up for many when she states, "the buzz is just magical."

Other teacher observations covered a broad range of positive behavioural changes for their students in relation to writing, some of which included:

* Support for each other when writing
* Increased talk and sharing of ideas when writing
* Enthusiasm for reading their written texts to the rest of the class
* Providing positive feedback to each other about their writing
* Writing at home and bringing it to school

The following stories from the classroom were shared by the teachers as a way of illustrating what they noted to be their students' awakened enthusiasm for writing.

They're writing letters to each other. I mean, we did do the postal service but that's done and gone and they're still doing it. So that shows me that they are motivated to write. If they're doing it at home and bringing it to school and giving their friends and they're always writing notes to me so I put it up near my table where they can see that it's valued.

Well, the parents were saying things like, I'll tell you what my parents were saying, 'My daughter went to a party and halfway through the party she asked for a notebook to go and write about the party.' Or, 'My daughter couldn't wait. We could not be late to school anymore.' This was a child that had been late the whole first term, '… because they had to write another story.' So that's good feedback when the parents are telling you their children want to come and write.

References

Armour, K.M. & Makopoulou, K. (2012). Great expectations: Teacher learning in a national professional development programme. *Teaching and Teacher Education* 28, 336-346.

Bandura, A. (1977). Self-efficacy: Toward a unifying theory of behavioral change. *Psychological Review*, 84, 191-215.

Bayer, J.K. (2014). The Components of Effective Professional Development Activities in terms of teachers' perspective. *International Online Journal of Educational Sciences*, 6(2), 319-327.

Berninger, V. W., & Winn, W. D. (2006). Implications of advancements in brain research and technology for writing development, writing instruction, and educational evolution. In C. A. MacArthur, S. Graham, & J. Fitzgerald (Eds.), *Handbook of Writing Research* (pp. 96–114). New York: The Guilford Press.

Bronson, M.B. (2000). *Self-Regulation in Early Childhood: Nature and Nurture*. New York: Guilford.

Brouwer, K.L.I (2012). Writing motivation of students with language impairments. *Child Language Teaching and Therapy* 28(2), 189-210.

Bruning, R., & Horn, C. (2000) Developing motivation to write. *Educational Psychologist*, 35, 25-37.

Byrnes, L.J. & Brown, P.M. (2007). *ORIENT: A scale to measure children's orientation to literacy*. Unpublished interview schedule, The University of Melbourne, Melbourne, Australia.

Cabell, S.Q., Tortorelli, L.S. & Gerde, H.K. (2013). How do I write...? Scaffolding preschoolers' early writing skills. *The Reading Teacher*, 66(8), 650–659.

Clarke, M. (2004). Reflection, journals and reflective questions: A strategy for professional learning. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, 29(2).

Dennis, L.R. & Votteler, N.K. (2012). Preschool teachers and children's emergent writing: Supporting diverse learners. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 41, 439–446.

Dixon, S.D (2008). Language is everywhere! Universally designed strategies to nurture oral and written language. *Young Exceptional Children*, 11(2).

Dunsmuir, S. & Blatchford, P. (2004). Predictors of writing competence in 4 – 7 year old children. *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, 74, 461-483.

Earley, P. & Porritt, V. (Eds.). (2009). *Effective Practices in Continuing Professional Development: Lessons from Schools.* London: Institute of Education Bedford Way series.

Erlbaum. McLeod, S. (1987). Some thoughts about feelings: The affective domain and the writing process. *College Composition and Communication*, 36, 465-471.

Fellowes, J. & Oakley, G. (2014). *Language, literacy and early childhood education* (2nd ed.). Melbourne: Oxford University Press.

Garet, M.S., Porter, A.C., Desimone, L., Birman, B.F. & Yoon, K.S. (2001). What makes professional development effective? Results from a national sample of teachers. *American Educational Research Journal*, 38(4), 915-945.

Gerde, H.K., Bingham, G.E. & Wasik, B.A. (2012). Writing in early childhood classrooms: Guidance for best practices. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 40(6), 351-359.

Girolametto , L., Weitzman, E. & Greenberg, J. (2012). Facilitating emergent literacy: Efficacy of a model that partners speech-language pathologists and educators. *American Journal of Speech-Language Pathology*, 21, 47–63.

Hargreaves, E. (2013). Assessment for learning and Teacher Learning Communities: UK teachers' experiences, *Teaching Education*, 24(3), 327-344.

Hay, I., Elias, G., Fielding-Barnsley, R., Homel, R., & Frieberg, K. (2007). Language delays, reading delays and learning difficulties: Interactive elements requiring multidimensional programming, *Journal of Learning Disabilities*, 40, 400–409.

Hedberg, P.R. (2009). Learning through reflective classroom practice: Applications to educate the reflective manager. *Journal of Management Education*, 33(1).

Kemmis, S. & McTaggart, R. (eds.). (1988). T*he action research planner*. Victoria: Deakin University Press.

Kemmis, S. & McTaggart, R. (2005). Participatory action research: Communicative Action and the Public Sphere. *Handbook of qualitative research*, pp. 559-603.

Kent, S., Wanzek , J., Petscher, Y., Al Otaiba, S. & Kim, Y. (2013). Writing fluency and quality in kindergarten and first grade: the role of attention, reading, transcription and oral language. *Reading and Writing*, 27, 1163–1188.

King, K.A. (2012). Writing workshop in preschool: Acknowledging children as writers. *The Reading Teacher*, 65(6), 392-401.

Lam. F.& Law, Y. (2007) The Roles of Instructional Practices and Motivation in Writing Performance. *The Journal of Experimental Education*, 2007, 75(2), 145-164.

Lam, S. F, Pak, T. S., & Ma, W. Y K. (2002, July). *The motivating instructional contexts inventory*. Paper presented at the 25th International Congress of Applied Psychology, Singapore.

Lane, H. B., & Wright, T.L. (2007). Maximizing the effectiveness of reading aloud. *The Reading Teacher*, 60 (7), 668-75.

Lepper, M. R., & Malone, T. W. (1987). Intrinsic motivation and instructional effectiveness in computer-based education. In R. E. Snow & M. J. Farr (Eds.), *Aptitude, learning, and instruction: Vol. 3. Cognitive and affective process analysis* (pp. 255-286). I-Illsdale, NJ.

Limbrick, L., Buchanan, P., Goodwin,M. & Schwarcz, H. (2010). Doing things differently: The outcomes of teachers researching their own practice in teaching writing. *Canadian Journal of Education*, 33(4), 897-924.

Magnifico, A.M. (2010). Writing for Whom? Cognition, motivation, and a writer's audience. *Educational pyschologist,* 45 (3), 167-184.

Maloney, C. & Konza, D. (2011). A case study of teachers' professional learning: Becoming a community of professional learning or not?. *Issues in Educational Research*, 21(1), 75-87.

Marinak, B.A., Gambrell, A.B. & Mazzoni, S.A. (2012). *The teacher the text and the context as factors in motivating students to write:* The motivation to write scale in Maximizing motivation for literacy learning. New York: Guilford Publication.

Mariko, S. (2011). Student teachers' reflective journals on teaching practice experiences. *Contemporary PNG Studies: DWU Research Journal,* 14, 67-83.

Mata, (2014). Motivation for reading and writing in kindergarten children. *Reading Psychology,* 32 (3), 272-299.

Mayer. K. (2007). Emerging knowledge about emergent writing. *Young children*, 62(1), 34.

Mertler, C. A. (2012). *Action research: Improving schools and empowering educators* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Mirchell, L. & Cubey, P. (2003). *Characteristics of professional development linked to enhanced pedagogy and children's learning in early childhood settings: Best evidence synthesis*. Wellington: New Zealand Ministry of Education.

Mockler, N. (2013). Teacher professional learning in a neoliberal age: Audit, professionalism and identity. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, 38(10).

Morrow, L.M., & Tracey, D.H. (2007). Best practices in early literacy development in preschool, kindergarten, and first grade. In L. B., Gambrell, L.M. Morrow, & M. Pressley (Eds.), *Best Practices in Literacy Education* (3rd ed.) (pp. 57–82). New York: Guilford Press.

National Institute for Literacy. (2010). *Developing Early Literacy: Executive Summary of the National Early Literacy Panel.* Maryland: National Institute for Literacy.

Neumann, M.M., Hood, M., Ford, R.M. & Neumann, D.L. (2012). The role of environmental print in emergent literacy. *Journal of Early Childhood Literacy,* 12, 231.

Nolen, S.B. (2007). Young children's motivation to read and write: Development in social contexts. *Cognition and Instruction*, 25, 219-270.

Ogle, D. &Beers, J.W. (2012). *Engaging in the language Arts: Exploring the power of language.* Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

Opfer, V.D. & Pedder, D. (2011). Conceptualizing teacher professional learning. *Review of Educational Research* 81(3), 376–407.

Pazeto, T. C. B., Seabra, A. G., & Dias, N. M. (2014). Executive functions, oral language and writing in preschool children: Development and correlations. *Paidéia (Ribeirão Preto)*, 24(58), 213-221.

Phillips, P. (2008). Professional development as a critical component of continuing teacher quality. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, 33 (1).

Pinto, G., Bigozzi, L., Gamannossi, B.A. & Vezzani, C. (2012). Emergent literacy and early writing skills, *The Journal of Genetic Psychology: Research and Theory on Human Development*, 173(3), 330-354.

Pitsoe, V.J. & Maila, W.M. (2012). Towards constructivist teacher professional development. *Journal of Social Sciences* 8 (3), 318-324.

Puranik, C.S. & Lonigan, C.J. (2012). Early writing deficits in preschoolers with oral language difficulties. *Journal of Learning Disabilities*, 45(2), 179-190.

Putman & Walker (2010). Motivating children to read and write: using informal learning environments as a context for literacy instruction. *Journal of Research in Childhood Education*, 24, 140-151.

Roskos, K.A., Tabors, P. O. & Lenhart, L.A. (2009). *Oral language and early literacy in preschool: Talking, reading and writing* (2nd ed.). International Reading Association.

School curriculum and standards authority. (n.d.). Pre-primary English assessment pointers.. Retrieved October 29th, 2014 from http://k10outline.scsa.wa.edu.au/assessment_principles_and_practice/judging_standards.

Shagoury, R. (2009). Language to language: Nurturing writing development in multilingual classrooms. *Young Children*, 64(2).

Stoll, L., Bolam, R., McMahon, A., Wallace, M. & Thomas, S. (2006). Professional learning communities: A review of the literature. J*ournal of Educational Change*, 7, 221–258.

Temple, C., Nathan, R. & Temple, C. (2013). Learning to write at the level of letters. In *The beginnings of writing: A practical guide to young children's discovery of writing through scribbling, spelling and composing stages* (4th ed.). New Jersey: Pearson Education.

Troia. G.A., Harbaugh. A.G., Shankland. R.K., Wolbers. K.A. & Lawrence. A.M. (2012). Relationships between writing motivation, writing activity, and writing performance: Effects of grade, sex, and ability. *Read Write* 26:17–44.

UK Department for Children, Schools and Families (2008). *Mark making matters: Young children making meaning in all areas of learning and development.* Nottingham: UK Department for Children, Schools and Families.

Vescio, V., Ross, D. & Adams, A. (2008). A review of research on the impact of professional learning communities on teaching practice and student learning. *Teaching and Teacher Education* 24, 80–91.

Wing, L. (1989). The influence of preschool teachers' beliefs on young children's conceptions of reading and writing. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 4, 61-74.

Wohlwend, K.E. (2011). *Playing their way into literacies: Reading, writing, and belonging in the early childhood classroom.* New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Appendix 1: Collecting information about teaching contexts (professional learning introductory session)

About my teaching context	
In order for us to understand the context in which you teach children to write we would appreciate if you would complete the form below.	
Name:	Year level:
School:	Suburb:
Socio-economic background of families:	
Provision of physical classroom space:	☐ Inadequate ☐ Adequate ☐ Very good
Why?	
Number of children in your class:	Average age of the children:
Educational assistants in your classroom:	Other adult assistance (other than parents) in your classroom:
Number of children for whom English is a second or additional language:	First or home languages (other than English) spoken by children:
Family involvement (with school / classroom):	☐ None ☐ Low ☐ Moderate ☐ High
Other features of your teaching situation that you would like to highlight:	

Appendix 2: Introductory session warm up activity

FIND SOMEONE WHO …

Walk around the room and question people in turn to identify those to whom the characteristics or factors listed in the chart below are applicable. Find and record the name of one different person for each characteristic or factor. Names can only be sourced through asking people directly. You can ask different questions of the same person but once an affirmative answer to a question is received you need to move on to someone else. When you have finished (or when indicated to finish) you sit back down.

Table 8: Teacher Action Research (adapted from Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005).

Find someone who…		Ask someone…	Name
..travelled more than 50 km to get here today.		Did you travel more than 50 km to get here today?	
…has been teaching for more than 10 years.		Have you been teaching for more than 10 years?	
…teaches kindergarten		Do you teach kindergaten?	
…has more than 26 children in their class		Do you have more than 26 children in your class?	
…has travelled overseas.		Have you travelled overseas?	
…has more than 3 children of their own.		Do you have more than 3 children of your own?	
…does yoga regularly.		Do you do yoga regularly?	
…had another profession before becoming a teacher.		Did you have another profession before becoming a teacher?	
…was born in May.		Were you born in May?	
…watches the news on television every night.		Do you watch the news on television every night?	

Appendix 3: Participant notes for presentation about 'How young children learn to write' (seminar day 1)

How young children learn to write

How children acquire the knowledge, skills and understandings important to learning to write.

<table>
<tr><td>

Learning to write involves developing an understanding of the communicative nature of written texts

Involves understanding that:

- Writing is a social activity
- Written texts are meaningful and communicate information
- The content or ideas of a written text come from the thoughts and ideas of the writer (author)

Texts have different practical communicative purposes; the author writes for a purpose and an intended audience.

</td></tr>
<tr><td>

Learning to write involves developing knowledge of Print and Text Concepts (the consistencies of print and texts)

Involves knowledge that:

- Print translates into spoken language
- Written and spoken words correspond
- Each spoken word is a written word
- There are spaces left to separate individual words in a written text
- What we read in a text stays the same when we re-read it
- There is a right side up to print
- There is a left to right, top to bottom sequence to reading and writing
- We go across the page and make a return sweep to the line of print directly underneath
- When reading a book, we start at the front and go towards the back

</td></tr>
<tr><td>

Learning to write involves developing oral language skill and competency (speaking and listening)

Ability with written texts involves the ability with:

- The production of spoken language
- Listening comprehension; memory
- Vocabulary
- syntax (grammar) knowledge
- Phonological awareness

Oral language (including grammatical ability, vocabulary and listening comprehension and phonological awareness) have a far reaching influence on literacy learning (National Institute for Literacy, 2010).

</td></tr>
<tr><td>

Learning to write involves developing oral language skill and competency: Phonological Awareness (inc. phonemic awareness)

… the ability to detect, manipulate, or analyse the auditory aspects of spoken language (including the ability to distinguish or segment words, syllables, or phonemes), independent of meaning (National Institute for Literacy, 2010).

Involves:

- Tuning into the sounds of language
- Hear and identify individual words in a sentence
- Identify words that rhyme (same endings); generate rhyming words
- Hear and identify each syllable in a word
- Hear and identify words that begin with the same sound
- Separating the onset from the rhyme in a syllable (on-set rime)
- Hearing individual phonemes in words (each small sound unit)

Phonemic Awareness

The understanding that every spoken word can be conceived as a series of phonemes.

Involves being able to detect, count, segment, blend and manipulate (play around with) individual phonemes in words:
An important ability in that it is a precursor to being able to use graphophonics (letter–sound) knowledge to encode or "sound out" when writing.

</td></tr>
</table>

Learning to write involves developing knowledge of letters and an understanding of the alphabetic principle

Knowledge of letters

The ability to recognise and name letters of the alphabet, both upper and lower case.

The Alphabetic Principle

The understanding that spoken language is made up of sounds and that sounds can be mapped to written letters.

Knowing that a systematic relationship exists between spoken words and written words.

Learning to write involves knowledge about sound / symbol correspondence and skill of being able to encode words

Sound / Symbol Correspondence

The relationship between phonemes in words and the letters used to represent them.

Linked to:

- Phonemic awareness: words are made up of individual sounds (phonemes)
- The alphabetic principle: alphabet letters are used to represent sounds (phonemes) in words
- Recognising and naming letters; converting oral language to written language

Encoding

To map from oral to written language using the alphabetic code – expressing a word in written code.

In order to write a word, a child must (orally) segment the word into its individual phonemes and then choose a letter or letter combination to represent each phoneme which they then record on paper.

Fine Motor coordination

- Grasping, manipulating and hand-eye co-ordination
- For the beginning writer the physical demands of writing are substantial

Symbolic Thought

A type of thinking in which symbols or internal images are used to represent objects, persons, and events that are not present; using one thing to represent another.

One to One Correspondence

The ability to match one object to one (corresponding) object.

Self-Regulation Skills

- Regulating own emotions, and behaviours
- To focus attention
- To manage thinking
- To deal with challenging situations

Appendix 4: Note taking sheet that accompanied the viewing of video clip, 'The Zoo'

About examining opportunities for oral language, reading and writing and features of the experiences that support children's motivation and engagement.

Meaningful / authentic literacy experiences	
Opportunities for choice, ownership and control	
Provision of feedback	
Developing self-efficacy for literacy – 'I can do it'	
Sense of a secure emotional environment	
Other	

Appendix 5: The Writing Audit (AISWA, n.d.)

Carry out an audit over a set period of time on the types of writing experiences in which the children in your class engage (example recording sheet below). Record the different writing activities, and for each, identify the context (features of the situation) and the nature of the text (purpose and audience) written. Bring your audit to the next session.

	Context Who initiated the writing? Linked to an experience? Topic / theme?	**Purpose** For what communicative intent were the children writing?	**Audience** Who was the audience for the children's writing?
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			
6			
7			
8			
9			
10			

Appendix 6: Writing experiences and examples of children's writing

For the next session:

Collect samples of children's writing and bring these to the next session. Additionally, consider one writing experience in which the children in your class engaged and note some of the features of the context of that experience. Use the following questions as a guide.

For what communicative purpose did the children write?	
Who was the 'audience' for the children's writing? (That is, who were the children communicating in writing to?)	
If it was a teacher initiated writing experience, what occurred for the children to lead them into writing to communicate?	
What was the role of the teacher as the children wrote?	
Attach samples of the children's writing	

Appendix 7: The School Curriculum and Standards Authority Pre-primary English assessment pointers

PRE-PRIMARY ENGLISH ASSESSMENT POINTERS

	The child demonstrates excellent achievement of what is expected for this year level	The child demonstrates high achievement of what is expected for this year level	The child demonstrates satisfactory achievement of what is expected for this year level	The child demonstrates limited achievement of what is expected for this year level	The child demonstrates very low achievement of what is expected for this year level
Text structure	Creates texts, connects and sequences ideas and events using some elements of a simpe text structure. Uses familiar words, phrases, images and beginning writing knowledge, with an accompanying drawing, if required.	Creates short texts with related sentences to record ideas and events using familiar words, phrases, images and beginning writing knowledge, with an accompanying drawing, if required. Some events and ideas are sequenced.	Creates short texts to record ideas and events using familiar words, phrases, images and beginning writing knowledge, with an accompanying drawing, if required.	Uses images and some familiar words, phrases and drawings to convey ideas and events.	Predominantly uses drawings to convey ideas and events.
Language features	Writes compound sentences using 'and' or 'because', reflecting extended oral language patterns to convey ideas, events and/or information. Writes more complex words and phrases related to personal experience or a specific topic. Uses illustrations to convey meaning and extend the message of the text.	Writes detailed simple sentences, reflecting oral language patterns to convey ideas, events and /or information. Writes familiar words and phrases which add detail and uses illustrations to convey meaning related to personal experience or a specific topic.	Writes short simple sentences to convey ideas, events and/or information. Writes familiar words and phrases related to personal experience of a specific topic.	Writes short simple sentences to convey ideas, events and/or information. Writes familiar words and phrases related to personal experience of a specific topic.	Writes a random string of letters or letter-like shapes. Draws images related to a personal experience.
Spelling	Writes compund sentences using 'and' or 'because', reflecting extended oral language patterns to convey ideas, events and/or information. Writes more complex words and phrases related to personal experience or a specific topic. Uses illustrations to convey meaning and extend the message of the text.	Correctly spells some high frequency words, including 'and', 'the', and simple CVC words. Spells words phonetically, representing most sounds.	Correctly spells some simple CVC words. Spells words phonetically, representing initial and key sounds.	Uses some letters to represent sounds. Writes letters to represent some initial or key sounds in words.	Forms some letter patterns. Writes a string of random letters.
Punctuation	Consistently uses capital letters to begin sentences and uses full stops to end sentences. Begins to use capital letters for proper nouns.	Uses capital letters to begin sentences and uses a full stop to mark the end of a sentence.	Experiments with capital letters and full stops in most sentences.	Attempts to apply capital letters and full stops; however, not always consistently.	Uses upper-case and lower-case letters without discrimination.

Pre-primary English assessment pointers. School curriculum and standards authority. Retrieved October 29th, 2014 from http://k10outline.scsa.wa.edu.au/assessment_principles_and_practice/judging_standards

Appendix 8: Survey, 'What do children think about writing?'

Writing…

Question	Yes	No	Not sure
1. Do you like writing or having a go at writing things?			
2. Do you like doing this by *yourself* or with *someone else*? *If someone else, who?*			
3. Is there somewhere special you like to go to write e.g. in the writing corner / at home in the kitchen? What kinds of things do you particularly like to write there?			
4. Do you like to choose the things you write? *E.g.write your name*			
5. Do you think it is a good idea to learn to write?			
If yes, why? What's good about learning to write?			
6. Are you looking forward to learning to write lots of different words?			
7. Who is teaching you to write? *What do they do? How do they teach you?*			
8. Did (Will) you have to do anything special to help yourself learn to write?			
If yes, what did (will) you do?			
9. Was (Is) it going to be easy for you to learn to write?			
Why do you think that? What if it is hard? What will adults do? What will you do?			
10. Now (When) you have learnt to write, what kinds of things will (do) you be able to write?			
11. Do you think you are (will be) good at writing?			
12. Is there something you always like to write e.g. your name on birthday cards? *If yes, what?*			

Appendix 9: Personal reading – note taking / reflection sheet to accompany article, 'Writing in early childhood classrooms: Guidance for best practice' (Gerde, Bingham & Wasik, 2012)'

Reflection and Change Process

i.   **Read** the article to develop a good understanding of the 12 effective practices.

ii. **Review** and evaluate your classroom learning environment and your teaching and learning practices in terms of the 12 effective practices for supporting children's learning and development as writers. **Determine** where you fall short in regards to each of the suggested practices and record this on the chart.

iii. In light of your evaluation, **establish** the changes you will make to the learning environment and the practices you will implement.

iv. Implement the changes that you have identified – these will likely be in terms of the learning environment, your teaching program, the class timetable and family engagement practices. They will also involve more subtle forms such as the way you interact with the children about written communication.

v.   Over time, **appraise** each of the changes you have made in terms of your observations about how each has affected children's engagement in writing and their learning; note your observations. Additionally, you might like to record / transcribe conversations with children, take photos and make copies of children's writing that demonstrate your observations. It is sometimes helpful and a little less overwhelming to focus some specific observations on 2 or 3 sample children.

Effective Practice	Review and Evaluation	Establish Changes and Additions
1. Build writing into your daily schedule • Create writing opportunities during daily activities or routines; e.g., write name to sign in, weather, daily journaling time • Include in multiple ways and on a daily basis; about 15 minutes into the daily schedule • Connect writing experiences to the daily theme / topic, the books that are read, or a special excursion • Write to represent thoughts and ideas		
2. Accept all forms of writing • Young children vary considerably in their ability to write – scribbles, scribble writing, and letter-like shapes • Celebrate and support scribbling, drawing, letter-like shapes and letters as children develop writing skills • More important for writing development than to focus on correct letter formation		
3. Explicitly model writing • Write with children observing and discuss how and what you are writing to draw attention to the process • Make the process of writing public e.g. write the morning message with children at mat time		
4. Scaffold children's writing • Provide hints and prompts to support children to write independently; individualise these hints by child • Not enough to just provide writing materials and opportunities for the children to write • Verbally remind children to use writing in centres; explain how they might use writing in play; teacher demonstrates use of written communication through mat time explanations and through joining in with children's play • Engage children in conversations about writing and ask children to sound out words and identify letter-sound matches		

Effective Practice	Review and Evaluation	Establish Changes and Additions
5. Encourage children to read what they write • Provide time for children to share their writing with others by reading to the group • Support children to read what they write to help them with the important understanding that you read what you write and there is a message. This should be done even when children's writing does not include formal letters		
6. Encourage invented spelling • Permit children to spell phonetically and support them to "write the sounds you hear" • A critical process for developing writing and phonological awareness • Requiring spelling accuracy may reduce children's writing attempts. • As children progress in this process, adults can offer hints or reminders about conventional spelling processes but should not insist on spelling accuracy • Recognise and appreciate their understanding of sounds and letters, but offer them information to correct their spelling as well		
7. Make writing opportunities meaningful • Meaningful purposes for children to write is motivating and helps writing make sense to children • Show that writing is used to communicate ideas and information e.g. signs, letters, labelling • Invite children to engage in writing that has a purpose and can help communicate their ideas and needs in an effective way		
8. Have writing materials in all centres • Include writing tools, various papers, and posters, books and theme-based word cards to support writing opportunities – needs to be accompanied by adult mediation or assistance • Children write when they are provided with meaningful writing opportunities in the context of their play • Provide teacher scaffolds re the pragmatic use of materials in the play contexts • Engage in conversations / demonstrations about how to use writing materials		
9. Display topic-related words in the writing centre • Include meaningful, topic-related words children can copy for their writing posted or on cards • Allows children to observe, manipulate, and write words that are meaningful for their ongoing classroom experiences		

Effective Practice	Review and Evaluation	Establish Changes and Additions
10. Engage in group writing experiences • Model writing and strategies writers use; use the "think aloud" strategy – work with small groups to focus on their specific needs re writing skills, knowledge and understandings • Support all children in the group to become involved in offering ideas • During group writing, "share the pen" – individual children write a word in a sentence that has been started and then finished by the teacher. • Display group writing around the room; refer to and discuss the displayed writing		
12. Family Involvement • Parental support of writing is related to children's literacy outcomes • Support parents to understand the importance of meaningful writing experiences • Share children's writing with families • Encourage parents to accept and celebrate all forms of writing as part of the developmental process • Children can write messages home to their parents telling them about their day – parents encouraged to write a message back to the children reinforcing the use of writing as a means of communication. • Class newsletter sent home / display board outside classroom (pick up area) – samples of children's writing; information about learning to write, supportive home practices		
13. Use Technology to Support Writing • To write • To share their writing with others		

Observation and Appraisal of the effect of your changes / additions in terms of children's interest in written communication, their engagement in writing experiences (free play / choice and teacher-led) and the development of writing knowledge, skills and understandings.

Children's interest in and engagement with written communication	Children's engagement in writing experiences (free play / choice and teacher-led)	Children's writing knowledge, skills and understandings

Appendix 10: Personal reading – note taking / reflection sheet to accompany article, '*Developing motivation to write*' (Bruning & Horn, 2000)

Motivation to Write: Examining Classroom Practices?

The article, *Developing Motivation to Write* (Bruning & Horn, 2010), provides an examination of some issues relevant to children's motivation for written communication. The authors outline some points of assumption (pp. 26-27) about writing development and learning; these are to do with the teacher's beliefs about writing, the need for children to experience writing as purposeful and to see it as an authentic form of communication and that knowledge about how children learn oral language is significant to their learning to communicate in writing. Furthermore, a framework is described whereby 4 factors important to the development and maintenance of motivation to write are explained. The focus is not specifically early childhood; nevertheless the 4 factors remain relevant to working with young beginner writers.

Read the article with a specific focus on how the information presented relates to the written communication teaching and learning practices of your classroom. Note the key points of each of the four factors explained and how your own teaching / classroom practices are supported by the information in the article and to any changes you might make to your practices.

Factors	Key Points and Important Practices	Application to your classroom practices
Nurturing Functional Beliefs About Writing [pp. 28-29]		
Fostering Student Engagement Through Authentic Writing Goals and Contexts [pp. 30-31]		
Providing a Supportive Context for Writing [pp. 31-33]		
Creating a Positive Emotional Environment [pp. 33-34]		

Appendix 11: DVDs and video clips used in the professional learning seminars

Video clip: The travel agent Young children engaged in socio-dramatic play in the classroom 'travel agent' centre	This video clip is from the lecturer's own collection. However, a similar type of video clip from Early Years Foundation Stage videos by 'educationgovuk' (video clip 7) is entitled, *"Early Years Foundation Stage: Children play at being travel agents"* and can be found at https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL79 14115EB65911A5
DVD: In the beginning: Young writers develop independence (2004) A teacher carrying out one-to-one writing conferences with the young children in her class; supporting the idea of the children as authors and publishing and the role of the audience; writing skills development in context, record-keeping ideas	Authored by Ralph Fletcher and JoAnn Portalupi and published by Steinhouse Publishers, USA (2004) ISBN: 978-157110-483-0 The DVD can be purchased from the publishers or streaming access from the publishers website can be purchased http://www.stenhouse.com/html/in-the-beginning.htm **or** It can be streamed / video license purchased from 'Kanopy' https://www.kanopystreaming.com/channel/stenhouse-publishers
Video clip: The Zoo	This is a Teachers TV video clip, entitled, *'EYFS Teaching and Learning-Literacy'*. It is available from Edchat TV at https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCxwQr-PDiuMkx90LP43p4yw
Video clip: Modelled Writing (UK National this Strategy)	This video clip is from the lecturer's own collection. It was distributed when the UK National Literacy Strategy was established. It is no longer available.

The following video clips which are relevant to the project topic are available from Teachers' Media (UK) http://www.teachersmedia.co.uk

- KS1 Literacy – Reading, Writing and Role-Play (15 minutes)
- Writing non-fiction
- Guided Writing
- Talk to write (3 part series)

Appendix 12: Reference list provided to teachers to support action research projects – Journal articles and academic papers that can be located via the www

Writing (General)	
Puranik, C.S. & Lonigan, C.J. (2011). From scribbles to scrabble: Preschool children's developing knowledge of written language. *Read Write* 24(5): 567–589.	http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3309424/pdf/nihms337368.pdf
Dunst, C.J.,Simkus, A. & Hamby, D.W.(2012). Children's story retelling as a literacy and language enhancement strategy. *Centre for early literacy learning (CELL) reviews*, 5 (2).	http://earlyliteracylearning.org/cellreviews/cellreviews_v5_n2.pdf
Trivette, C.M., Simkus, A., Dunst, C.J. & Hamby, D.W. (2012). Repeated book reading and pre-schoolers' early literacy development. *Centre for early literacy learning (CELL) reviews*, 5 (5).	http://earlyliteracylearning.org/cellreviews/cellreviews_v5_n5.pdf
Strickland, D., Riley-Ayers, S. (2006). *Early Literacy: Policy and Practice in the Preschool Years.* National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER), Rutgers University.	
Vukelich, C. & Christie, J. (2009). *How children learn to read and write: Building a foundation for preschool literacy* (pp. 1-15). Newark, DE: International Reading Association.	http://www.reading.org/Libraries/books/bk700-1-Vukelich.pdf
UK Department for Children, Schools and Families (2008). *Mark making matters: Young children making meaning in all areas of learning and development.* Nottingham , UK: Department for Children,Schools and Families.	http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20110202093118/http://nationalstrategies.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/node/132558
Dombey , H. (2013) What we know about teaching writing. *Preschool & Primary Education*, 1 (1) pp. 22-40	http://childeducation-journal.org
Centre for Early Literacy Learning (Cell). (2010) Starting write: Invented spelling and writing. *CELL Practices* .	http://www.earlyliteracylearning.org/cellpract_pract/presch/PGPrac_P_StartWrite_WM.pdf
Handbook of early literacy Edited by Nigel Hall, Joanne Larson, Jackie Marsh Chapter 19: Moving into literacy: how it all begins by Leslie Lancastar & Chapter 24: Writing the world by Francis Christie.	
Pound, L. *Making their mark – children's early writing. Early Education* – The British Association for early childhood writing.	http://www.early-education.org.uk/sites/default/files/publications/Making%20their%20mark%20-%20children%27s%20early%20writing%20%287%29.pdf
Neuman, S.B., Copple,C & and Bredekamp, S. (2004). *Learning to read and write: Developmentally appropriate practices for young children.* National Association for the Education of Young Children.	http://www-tc.pbs.org/teacherline/courses/rdla155/pdfs/c2s2_5devapprop.pdf
Dunsmui , S. & Blatchford, P. (2004). Predictors of writing competence in 4- to 7-year-old children. *British Journal of Educational Psychology,* 74.	http://clal.gdufs.edu.cn/personal/statistics/phd/chap5/dunsmuir2004%28multiple%20regression%29.pdf
Trivette, C.M., Dunst, C.J. & Hamby, D.W. (2013). Influences of different types of writing activities on the emergent writing abilities of toddlers and pre-schoolers. *Centre for early literacy learning (CELL) reviews*, 6 (3).	http://www.earlyliteracylearning.org/cellreviews/cellreviews_v6_no3.pdf

ESL and Literacy / Writing

Seda, I. & Shareen Abramson, S. (1990). Position paper on language and literacy development for young English language learners (ages 3-8). *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 5, 379-391.	http://www.tesol.org/docs/pdf/371.pdf?sfvrsn=2
Tabors, P.O. (1998). What early childhood educators need to know: Developing effective programs for linguistically and culturally diverse children and families. *Young children*, November.	https://www.naeyc.org/files/tyc/file/WhatECENeedToKnow.pdf

Writing Assessment

Schickedanz, J.A., & Casbergue, R.M. (2009). *Assessing Writing Development in the Early Years. In Writing in Preschool* (pp. 75-87). Newark, DE: International Reading Association.	http://www.reading.org/Libraries/books/bk691-6-Schickedanz.pdf

Oral Language & Early Literacy (Writing)

Roskos, K.A., Tabors, P.O., & Lenhart, L.A. (2009). Joining Oral Language and Early Literacy. In *Oral Language and Early Literacy in Preschool* (pp. 1-6). Newark, DE: International Reading Association.	http://www.reading.org/Libraries/books/bk693-1-Roskos.pdf
Van Zon, L. (no date). *Exploring the connections between oral language and literacy.* Exceptional Learning Centre.	http://exlcentre.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/04/ExploringConnections.pdf
Pullen, P.C. & Justice, L.M. (2003). Enhancing phonological awareness, print awareness and oral language skills in preschool children. *Intervention in school and clinic*, 39 (2).	https://ivent.com.au/~speech/pdf/papers/pullenjustice2003.pdf

Play and Literacy (Writing)

Owocki, G. (2001). Sociodramatic play and literacy in Make way for literacy! Teaching the way young children learn by Gretchen Owocki.	http://www.heinemann.com/shared/onlineresources/E00270/chapter10.pdf
Galeano, R. (2011). Scaffolding productive language skills through sociodramatic play. *American journal of play,* pp. 324-355.	http://www.journalofplay.org/sites/www.journalofplay.org/files/pdf-articles/3-3-article-galeano-scaffolding-productive-language-skills.pdf
Mielonen, A.M. & Paterson, W (2009). Developing Literacy through Play. *Journal of Inquiry & Action in Education*, 3(1).	http://digitalcommons.buffalostate.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1020&context=jiae
Stone, S.J. & Stone, W. (no date) *Symbolic Play and Emergent Literac*y.	http://www.iccp-play.org/documents/brno/stone1.pdf
Bodrova, E. & Leong, D.J. (2003). Chopsticks and counting chips: Play and foundational skills don't need to compete for the teacher's attention. *Young children* (pp. 1-8).	http://www.naeyc.org/files/yc/file/200305/Chopsticks_Bodrova.pdf
Learning through Landscapes (2009). Taking it outdoors: Communication, language and literacy. *Learning through landscapes.*	http://www.essex.gov.uk/Business-Partners/Early-Years-Childcare/Documents/Playnotes_language_literacy.pdf
Roskos,K. & Christie, J. (2011).The play-literacy nexus and the importance of evidence-based techniques in the classroom. *American journal of play*, 4 (2).	http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ985588.pdf

Literacy (writing) & the Classroom Environment

Reutzel , D.R. & Wolfersberger, M. (1996). An environmental impact statement: Designing supportive literacy classrooms for young children. Reading horizons, 36 (3).	http://scholarworks.wmich.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1318&context=reading_horizons
The National Strategies UK (2009). *The crucial role of the Early Years practitioner in supporting young writers within a literacy-rich environment.* UK: The National Strategies Early Years: Gateway to writing.	http://www.foundationyears.org.uk/files/2011/11/Gateway-to-Writing-crucial-role-of-the-early-years-practitioner.pdf

Writing for Authentic purposes	
The Nature of young children's authoring *in Handbook of early literacy* edited by Nigel Hall, Joanne Larson, Jackie Marsh.	

Writing and ICT	
Moody, A.K. (2010). Using electronic books in the classroom to enhance emergent literacy skills in young children. Journal of literacy and technology, 11 (4).	http://www.pathstoliteracy.org/sites/pathstoliteracy.perkinsdev1.org/files/uploaded-files/JLT_V11_4_2_Moody.pdf
Hourcade, J., Parette, H., Boeckmann, N.& Blum, C. (2010). Handy Manny and the emergent literacy technology toolkit. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 37 (6).	http://scholarworks.boisestate.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1009&context=sped_facpubs
Parette, H.P., Hourcade, J., Dinelli, J.M. & Boeckmann, N.M. (2009) Using clicker 5 to enhance emergent literacy in young children. Early childhood education journal, 36.	http://scholarworks.boisestate.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1004&context=sped_facpubs
Burnett, C. (2010). Technology and literacy in early childhood educational settings: a review of research. *Journal of early childhood literacy*, 10 (3).	http://shura.shu.ac.uk/1308/1/Final_JECL_%283%29.pdf
Beck, J. (2002). Emerging literacy through assistive technology. *Teaching exceptional children*, 35 (2).	http://webzoom.freewebs.com/sallydoxie/VOL.35NO.2NOVDEC2002_TEC_Article%206.pdf
Cviko, A., McKenney, S. & Voogt, J. (2012) Teachers enacting a technology-rich curriculum for emergent literacy. *Education Technology Research*, 60: 31–54 Development Journal.	http://download.springer.com/static/pdf/993/art%253A10.1007%252Fs11423-011-9208-3.pdf?auth66=1403934018_314554f4a3167fd1cda04bd7d9cf5368&ext=.pdf
Labbo, L.D. (2005). From Morning Message to Digital Morning Message: Moving from the tried and true to the new. T*he reading teacher*, 58 (8).	http://stancock.iweb.bsu.edu/edrdg445/online/pdf/morningmessage.pdf
Ferdig, R.E. (2014). Technologies for acquiring and making literacy. *Reading today online*	http://www.reading.org/reading-today/digital/post/engage/2014/06/27/technologies-for-acquiring-and-making-literacy#.U651jbHDUe8

Writing and Diverse Learners	
Dennis , L.R.& Votteler, N.K. (2013) Preschool Teachers and Children's Emergent Writing: Supporting Diverse Learners. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 41:439–446.	http://webzoom.freewebs.com/sallydoxie/VOL.35NO.2NOVDEC2002_TEC_Article%206.pdf

Modelled, Shared & Interactive Writing	
Cox, C. (no date) *Interactive Writing.* Reading rockets.	http://www.readingrockets.org/article/48489
Bodrova, E. Scaffolding emergent writing in the zone of proximal development. *Literacy Teaching and Learning,* 3 (2).	http://www.earlyliteracyinfo.org/documents/pdf/doc_122.pdf

Independent Writing	
Davidson, C. (2007). Independent writing in current approaches to writing instruction: What have we overlooked? *English Teaching: Practice and Critique*, 6 (1).	http://education.waikato.ac.nz/research/files/etpc/2007v6n1art1.pd
Cabell, S. Q. , Tortorelli, L. S. & , Gerde, H. K. (2013).How Do I Write … ?. *The Reading Teacher*, 66(8), 650–659.	http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/trtr.1173/pdf
Mayer-White, K. (2013). Associations between teacher–child relationships and children's writing in kindergarten and first grade. *Early childhood research quarterly*, 28.	http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0885200612000440#

Drawing, scribbles and writing; invented spelling	
Trivette, C.M.,Hamby, D.W. Dunst, C.J. & Gorman, E. (2013) Emergent writing among young children from twelve to sixty months of age. Centre for early literacy learning (CELL) reviews, 6 (2).	http://www.earlyliteracylearning.org/cellreviews/cellreviews_v6_n2.pdf

Department of Education, Queensland(2012) Drawing and writing (resource sheet).	http://deta.qld.gov.au/earlychildhood/pdfs/tip-sheets/drawing-writing.pdf
Mackenzie, N.M. (2011). From drawing to writing: What happens when you shift teaching priorities in the first six months of school.	http://www.academia.edu/1105001/Mackenzie_N._M._2011_._From_drawing_to_writing_What_happens_when_you_shift_teaching_priorities_in_the_first_six_months_of_school_Australian_Journal_of_Language_and_Literacy_34_3_
Diffily, D. (2001). From scribbles to stories: Supporting writing development. *Texas childcare,2-8*.	http://www.childcarequarterly.com/pdf/summer01_scribbles.pdf
Kolodzej, N.J.& Columba,L. (no date) Invented spelling: Guidelines for parents.	http://www.public.asu.edu/~diann/Resources/Readings/Invented%20Spelling--Guidelines%20for%20Parents.pdf
Richgels, D.J. (1986) Beginners first grade invented spelling ability and their performance in functional classroom writing activities. *Early childhood research quarterly,* 1.	http://www.niu.edu/cedu_richgels/PDFs/ECRQ1986.pdf
Story book reading and writing (literacy) development	
Justice, L.M. & Kaderavek, J. (2002). Using shared storybook reading to promote emergent literacy. *Teaching exceptional children*, 34 (4).	http://www.readitonceagain.com/research/Using%20Shared%20Story%20book%20Reading.pdf
Justice , L.M., Kaderavek , J.N., Fan, X., Sofka, A. & Hunt, A. (2009) Accelerating preschoolers' early literacy development through classroom-based teacher – child storybook reading and explicit print referencing. *Language, speech and hearing services in schools*, 40.	http://ici-bostonready-pd-2009-2010.wikispaces.umb.edu/file/view/Accelerating+Preschoolers+Early+Literacy+Development.pdf/147489275/Accelerating%20Preschoolers%20Early%20Literacy%20Development.pdf
SOME USEFUL WEBSITES:	
Readwritethink http://www.readwritethink.org/	Refer to the book extract and lesson ideas about Family message journals and Teaching writing through family involvement
The balanced literacy diet: Putting research into practice in the classroom http://www.oise.utoronto.ca/balancedliteracydiet/Oral_Language_ELL.html	This website includes information notes, 'how to' videos and practical ideas for early language and literacy teaching / learning. For ideas that focus on purposeful writing experiences for young children *refer to section (tab) entitled 'Recipe Finder' (pre-K and K) – Morning message; Writers' workshop; Classroom mail box; Café drama centre; Writing centre; Poem of the week; Artwork Writing; Class Pets; Picture writing; Our class experience; Class photo library; Interactive to Independent Writing; How to Make a Fire Truck!; Making it Real!; Meaningful Attendance (and others)*
Centre for Early Literacy Learning http://www.earlyliteracylearning.org	**Refer to tab – Products and, within this section:** *Practitioner practice guides:* These guides can be used by early childhood educators for promoting infants, toddlers, and pre-schoolers literacy learning using interest-based and highly engaging activities *Practice guides with adaptations:* These guides make it easier for young children with disabilities to participate in early literacy learning activities *Cell reviews:* These are practice-based research syntheses of early literacy learning studies **The cell tools are also useful.** **Refer to section entitled,** *Practice Guides* **– Writing: 'Starting Write', 'Author! Author!'** and **'You've Got Mail'** and to **'Practice Guides' – Literacy Rich Experiences: 'A Place for Writing', 'Keyboarding with Kids'** and **'Words Everywhere'.**

Contact ECU by
phone on **134 ECU (134 328)**

Email us at **enquiries@ecu.edu.au**

Website **www.ecu.edu.au**

Become a fan at
facebook.com/students.ecu

Follow us at
twitter.com/ecu

Watch us at
youtube.com/edithcowanuniversity