Writing For Pleasure principle in focus

Purposeful and authentic class writing projects

Description of the principle
Meaningfulness affects learner engagement and outcomes to a considerable extent. Writing projects are most meaningful to children if they are given the opportunity to generate their own subject and purpose, write at their own pace, in their own way, with agency over how they want to use the form, and with a clear sense of a real reader. Given these circumstances, writers are likely to remain focused on a task, have self-determination, maintain a strong personal agency over and commitment to their writing, and so produce something significant for themselves and in keeping with teacher expectations. In short, when children care about their writing, they want it to do well.

What Writing For Pleasure teachers do
- Teachers and children together consider the purpose and future audiences for their class writing projects. Because children are given the opportunity to generate their own ideas and had a strong sense of a real reader and a clear distant goal for the writing to be published, the projects are seen as meaningful.
- Agency plays an important role within class writing projects. Children are encouraged to either generate their own individual ideas, share and work on ideas in ‘clusters’ or, as a whole class, generate an idea that they could all pursue together.
- It is striking that teachers regularly refocus their children on considering the future readership and publication of their piece throughout their projects.
- Class writing projects are worked on over a number of weeks.

Questions to consider
- Do you develop class writing projects that are undertaken over an extended period of time?
- Do you plan class writing projects which look and feel like writing undertaken in life outside the classroom?
- Do you ensure children believe the writing project to be authentic, purposeful and meaningful to their development as a writer?
- Is there a real reason for the writing to be composed? Is children’s writing publish or performed for real audiences?
- Do you elicit widespread enthusiasm and participation that is focused on developing as a writer?
- Do you demonstrate how a particular genre might be structured and show examples of writing which are effective and meaningful?
- Do you afford children some agency and ownership over the topics/ideas they’ll use to complete the writing project?
- Do you encourage children to harness their own funds of knowledge in their writing?
- Can children can generate an individual idea to write about.
- Can children generate ideas collaboratively and as a result do you allow children to write on the same idea in ‘clusters’?
- Can children help generate whole-class ideas for a class writing project?

Why not share an example of your own writing practice? Visit: writing4pleasure.com