



Scaffolding Writing for Young Learners or New English Language Learners

- Begin with the simplest text type, the personal recount. This reconstructs a past experience, in which the writer has been involved. A school field trip is a perfect place to start. Have children take photographs, draw sketches, and make notes during the field trip. The photographs, sketches, and notes can serve as prompts for oral discussion when you return to class. The oral discussion will allow the children the opportunity to discuss their experience. After the discussion, they can use all of the prompts for writing a recount.
- For very young learners or ELL's with little English, provide more of a framework when writing. Using the example above, the children can complete the following scaffold:
On _____ our class went to _____.
First we visited _____ . We saw _____ there.
Then we went to _____.
Next we visited _____ and saw _____.
Finally we got back on the bus and _____.
We got back to school at _____ . It was fun!
- Allow children to write in their first language. This will ease frustration when they cannot complete a task in English.
- Use bilingual examples (with the help of a parent) whenever possible.
- Allow children to draw pictures of what they would like to write (narratives and recounts work perfectly for this) and have them explain what they would like to write. A teacher, classroom assistant, or another adult can act as the scribe for what the child wants to write. Eventually, this process moves to where the child takes a more active role in the actual writing.
- Use dialogue journals between an ELL and yourself or an English-speaking buddy.
- Model writing by creating a story of your own in front of the children. Use a photograph and write about it, but keep the language simple and accessible for the children. For example: *This is my dog. He is chocolate brown and black. His name is Dylan.* The children can then do the same thing with a photograph of their own.
- Use explicit scaffolds for writing different text types.
- Always use graphic organizers or ways for children to express their thinking. Don't just give them a blank piece of paper and ask them to start writing!
- Engage in a conversation about writing. Talk it through with the children. Discuss what they would like to write before they start.
- Use what interests the students, what stories they have, and what they already know.

Ideas adapted from:

Scaffolding Language, Scaffolding Learning © Pauline Gibbons, pages 69-70

Becoming One Community, Reading and Writing with English Language Learners © Kathleen Fay and Suzanne Whaley, pages 160-163

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