



Transactional Writing: Explanation

LEVEL | 1i | 1ii | 1iii | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5

How Chickens Hatch

THE LEARNING CONTEXT

This class was involved in a science unit about chickens and eggs. There were opportunities for shared experiences and class discussion over a period of time.

The teacher shared stories, picture books and simple transactional texts, which served to expand on the real experiences they had observed. Some of the books offered some details of how a chicken comes out of an egg. By using appropriate questioning in text discussions, the teacher also ensured that they had some understanding of topic-related vocabulary. Other follow-up activities included imaginative role-play.

The teacher then posed the question, “How does a chicken get out of an egg?” as a writing topic, and asked the students to explain the process to a partner. When the teacher was satisfied that they all had something to say, they were expected to write a response to the question. She emphasised the need for them to record all the sounds in words that they could hear, just as she had modelled.

The teacher moved around the room while the students were writing and drawing, and was able to conference with each student as they completed the task. She wanted them to explain the “laying an egg” process as clearly as possible.

Teacher-student conversations

After the first draft:

Teacher: Can you read your story to me?

[Dominique reads.]

Teacher: Well done! Telling me about the special tooth really helps explain how they get out. You have done a great job with all these words... how did you work out how to write “tooth”?

Dominique: I wrote down all the sounds I can hear.

[Teacher acknowledges the correct letter sounds/blends in her writing.]

Teacher: Oh – and I love boiled eggs too!

INTEGRATING READING AND WRITING

Opportunities should be sought in classroom reading programmes for students to respond to written and visual texts, identifying how processes or phenomena can be explained. Exposure to transactional texts will be essential. The “reading to” programme, using picture books, will provide opportunities for discussing specific vocabulary, language features and diagrams, which may be transferred to student writing and drawing.

WHERE TO NEXT?

To move Dominique towards the next learning step, the teacher might help her to focus on:

Ideas

- extending ideas with some simple detail or comments.

Sentences

- becoming confident with both simple and compound sentences.

Vocabulary

- encouraging extended use of topic-appropriate words.

Punctuation

- encouraging consistency with use of capital letters.

This could be done by:

- ongoing class and individual discussion, prompting further detail through questioning
- modelling texts with examples of the language features of explanation
- conferencing and giving feedback, in reading and writing programmes.



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CURRICULUM LINKS

English in the New Zealand Curriculum

Level 1: Writing Functions

Transactional Writing: Students should write instructions and recount events in authentic contexts.

Levels 1 and 2: Reading and Writing Processes

Exploring Language: Students should explore choices made by writers, and identify and use the common conventions of writing and organisation of text which affect understanding.

Thinking Critically: Students should identify and express meanings in written texts, drawing on personal background, knowledge and experience.

Processing Information: Students should identify, retrieve, record, and present coherent information, using more than one source and type of technology, and describing the process used.

English in the New Zealand Curriculum, pages 35-36

Te Whariki

Pages 76-79

Strand 4, Communication

All of goals 2 and 3, and the associated learning outcomes for knowledge, skills, and attitudes.

REFERENCES

Ministry of Education (1994). *English in the New Zealand Curriculum*. Wellington: Learning Media.

Ministry of Education (1996). *Te Whāriki: He Whāriki Mātauranga mō ngā Mokopuna o Aotearoa/Early Childhood Curriculum*. Wellington: Learning Media.



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WHAT THE WORK SHOWS: Dominique has attempted to explain a personally significant process. Her work shows a basic level of understanding in science, as she makes discoveries about the world around her, but it comes strongly from a personal perspective.

Student's first draft

Deeper features

Ideas

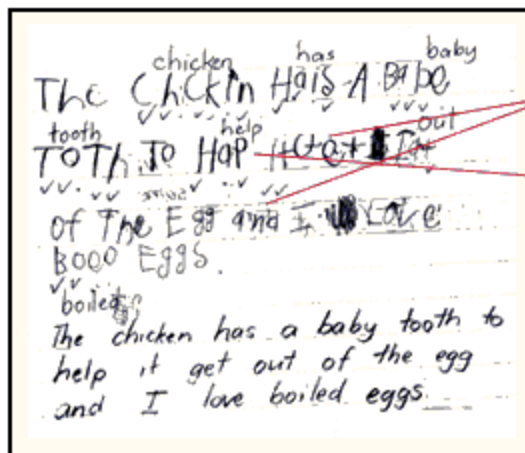
Attempts to write a simple idea as an explanation from a personal perspective.

Sentences

Attempts a compound sentence.

Vocabulary

Uses key topic-appropriate words and some high-frequency words.



Surface features

Spelling

Spells some high-frequency words correctly.

Identifies most initial letter sounds.

Identifies dominant sounds in words, and records some of these accurately.

Punctuation

Experiments with capital letters and full stops.

Layout

Leaves space between most words.

Demonstrates consistency in directionality.

The chickin Hais A Babe ToTh To HaP it Get lat of The Egg and I Love Boeo Eggs.

[The chicken has a baby tooth to help it get out of the egg and I love boiled eggs.]



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How Chickens Hatch

Student's first draft

