7. Classroom teaching strategies

Effective teaching is structured and focused on the learning needs of each student in the class. In some programs and designs that focus on early literacy, each lesson is scripted and planned in detail in advance. In this way, the developers are able to ensure that lessons are highly purposeful and structured. Some developers indeed claim that this enables them to ensure that their programs are almost ‘teacher proof’, meaning that any teacher regardless of their previous level of training and expertise can successfully implement them. But in situations where there are competent, well-trained teachers, this approach denies them important opportunities to exercise their professional ability and judgment in responding to the individual needs of students.

To focus teaching successfully on the learning needs of all students in the classroom is by no means an easy task. It constitutes one of the greatest challenges faced by teachers, particularly given the wide range of abilities within the typical classroom. Focused literacy teaching requires well-developed understandings of how children learn and of the reading and writing processes. It requires well-developed classroom routines and expert organisation and management related to the teaching of small groups. It also requires teachers who are adept in implementing a range of classroom practices and strategies in response to the needs of individual students.

In CLaSS, the emphasis is on raising the professional competence of teachers so that they are better able to implement effective classroom literacy strategies that are both structured and focused on the learning needs of all students.

These strategies are not unknown to most teachers. Through programs such as the Early Literacy In-service Course (ELIC), a high proportion of Australian teachers have long been familiar with them. ELIC drew upon good first teaching practices that have been widespread in New Zealand classrooms over the past twenty years and that were credited with leading to that country’s pre-eminent ranking in international surveys of reading. These practices incorporate a number of strategies that have been carefully researched and documented and continue to be a rich resource to the present day.

Prior to 1996 many teachers had adopted these teaching strategies, often in a partial and ad hoc manner without the necessary organisational procedures in place to enable them to be of maximum effectiveness. Through the Early Literacy Research Project (ELRP), the ‘design’ was developed and in 1998 the Catholic Education Commission of Victoria (CECV) implemented the full implementation of the design through CLaSS.

The students in any one class represent varying levels of reading and writing ability throughout the year: from the low level of independence (requiring a high level of teacher support), to a high level of independence (requiring low level of teacher support). The teacher’s role changes over the year as the students take more responsibility for their own learning. The emphasis of CLaSS professional development sessions is to assist teachers to implement the following instructional strategies within a daily two-hour literacy block:
Reading

Whole Class
• Shared Reading

Small Group
• Read to
• Language Experience – reading
• Shared Reading
• Guided Reading
• Independent Reading

WRITING

Whole Class
• Modelled Writing
• Shared Writing

Small Group
• Shared Writing – small group focus
• Language Experience-writing
• Interactive Writing
• Modelled Writing – small group focus
• Guided Writing

When planning a teaching session the CLaSS teacher selects the most appropriate instructional strategy with the guidance from the student profiles and data cards kept for each student. For CLaSS teachers the important issues to keep in mind are the:
• developmental reading stage of each student
• learning needs of each student as determined by the assessment and monitoring data
• teaching focus for each session.

A range of instructional strategies is necessary in any class to provide for the diverse needs of all students. CLaSS teachers plan a variety of strategies every day during the reading and writing blocks. Each instructional strategy provides a different level of teacher support and provides unique opportunities to support students as they develop into engaged, responsive and reflective readers and writers. The structures in which the students operate provide varying degrees of independence and responsibility. For example, Shared Reading provides greater teacher support than Guided Reading, which requires the students to read chunks of texts independently and to problem-solve to gain meaning.
In planning the reading and writing sessions, it is important for teachers to take into consideration the experiences of the students in the group, the features of the text to be read, the challenges of the texts to be created and the purpose of the session. Being familiar with the details of each student’s reading and writing knowledge allows the teacher to use the instructional strategies flexibly to meet the needs of each individual within their class. CLaSS teachers have the support of their Literacy Coordinator who is there to guide and mentor the teachers as they match their instruction to the needs of the individual students.

Reading

Shared reading

Holdaway introduced the process of incorporating repetitive stories, chants and songs into classroom practice during the 1970s. Programs, techniques and styles of teaching based on this approach came to be loosely grouped together under the term ‘shared book experience’. In this approach the teacher often uses enlarged texts. In CLaSS, shared reading is seen as the step between reading to children and independent reading by children: the step where children learn to read by reading.

Shared reading occurs when students join in with the reading of a book or text piece with a teacher or another experienced reader. It is important to have a text that is large enough for all in the group to be able to see the print clearly. A text may be reread many times as long as the students continue to find the experience enjoyable and purposeful. Because of the non-competitive learning environment, risk taking, mistakes and approximations are seen as a normal part of learning – not as failures.

CLaSS teachers have refined their understandings and use of this familiar instructional strategy. The use of data to inform the text selections, the grouping of students and the amount of time groups engage in shared reading has assisted in fine-tuning what was already a well-known instructional strategy.

A number of teaching points can be consistently reinforced during shared reading:

- aspects of language (structure, rhyme, rhythm, and alliteration)
- concepts about print (directionality, one-to-one matching, spatial concepts, punctuation, words and letters)
- clarification of concepts (whole story or individual concepts)
- reading strategies (predicting, locating, checking, confirmation, self-correcting at the letter, word, or text level)
- comprehending the message (main idea, important facts, storyline development, character development, etc.)
- informational skills (gained from title, contents page, cover, illustrations, index, and glossary).

Research has shown that when shared reading happens on a daily basis, ESL students read with greater comprehension, know more sight words and are better able to repeat simple sentences based on the structures of English. 

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Shared reading usually involves reading familiar texts with phrasing and fluency and enjoyment, or introducing a new text. It requires the teacher to make astute choices about pertinent discussion which may occur before, during and after the text reading.

Through shared reading, children can become independent in reading material that would otherwise be too difficult. Shared reading forms the central role in the ‘whole class’ focus at the beginning of each daily reading workshop.

**Language Experience—Reading**

An effective oral language program teaches children how to communicate and also assists them to gain control over the oral language structures that will provide a basis for their reading and writing. Proficiency in oral language is important for self-expression and for communicating ideas. Educational psychologists such as Jerome Bruner stress that proficiency in oral language is a vital tool for thought. Without fluent and structured oral language, children find it very difficult to think abstractly and symbolically. Particular attention must be given to oral language contexts in which the language or dialect a child uses in the home is different from the one the teacher uses in the classroom.

In many classrooms, while much time is spent teaching reading and writing, children are often expected to ‘pick up’ oral language in the course of the day. While this may be a reasonable expectation within the busy curriculum for those who come from a background where English is their first language, it is unrealistic for many students from non-English-speaking backgrounds. Within CLaSS, the Record of Oral Language (ROL) is the primary tool used to ascertain the level of understanding that each student has of the structures of oral English. In addition to this, teachers are encouraged to use a range of formal and informal assessment tools such as re-telling to peers and self-assessment. From this information, each classroom teacher is able to build on the strengths of each student and identify those students for whom extra assistance is required.

In analysing the ROL results, CLaSS teachers’ study in detail the way in which each student has attacked the ‘level sentences’ that they have been unable to repeat correctly. They look for any patterns in the errors. They will try to establish what each student does when he or she makes an error. It is vital that the information gained through the use of the Record of Oral Language be used to adjust the language of the classroom. One of the most effective ways of raising the level of a student’s control over the structures of English is to provide that student with many opportunities to speak with a competent and flexible adult speaker of English. The children for whom the structures of oral English are difficult should be identified for special attention in oral language development.

Exploring language as a precursor to reading is an opportunity to help students establish clear links between the real world and the symbols of language. The purpose of working with oral language as part of the reading acquisition stage is to help students understand that what I think I can say and what I say can be written down and what is written down can be read. Through reading, these thoughts can be shared with others and explored even further. The Language Experience: Reading Instructional Strategy enables teachers to help develop language by looking at, thinking about and feeling or reacting to certain experiences, thereby enriching their speaking and listening as well as their attention to print.
It is essential to provide opportunities for learners to express their thoughts without fear of failure, and for teachers to support students’ oral language attempts and modelling of correct structures. The Language Experience: Reading Instructional Strategy provides the opportunity for:

- linking oral and written messages
- exploring the reciprocal gains in reading, writing, and speaking
- learning about concepts of print (print contains a message; these messages are assembled in consistent order of letters, words, lines on a page, pages in a book and punctuation)
- developing learners’ capacity to articulate ideas and recall them as they read back their ideas.

Teachers help students to record their own experiences and ideas in their own words and then work these stories into text that the students can read independently. Because the students have been involved in the formulation of the content they are provided with the semantic, syntactic, and grapho-phonic prior knowledge that acts as a scaffold in the reading process. As part of the process, teachers begin taking running records on the language experience readings, in order to record the development of students’ reading strategies.

**Reading to children**

Within CLaSS, teachers are encouraged to continue the practice of setting aside a time each day in which they engage in a Read Aloud to the whole class. This is seen as a time when the numerous themes and topics can be integrated by the use of the Read Aloud instructional strategy. This is a powerful strategy that can be used throughout the day.

Students learn to read by being read to and by having opportunities to interact with the reading. If students do not have this experience at home, then it is imperative that schools provide a systematic, frequent and enjoyable way for this to take place.

It is critical to remember that *listening comprehension precedes reading comprehension*. Regular opportunities to listen to texts read aloud increase this capacity in all students. For students who are well underway with their reading but struggle with comprehending their texts, then they too can benefit from having texts read to them in a small group setting, even at high text levels.

Some students will need frequent opportunities to be read to in small groups, particularly those students with low oral language scores on the Record of Oral Language. By grouping these students together, for small group ‘read to’, teachers allow them more opportunities to interact with books by making comments and asking questions in a small group setting.

In terms of language skills, reading to children leads to vocabulary acquisition. If students have never heard a word they will not use it in their own speech, and therefore will not be able to read and understand this word. Students who would benefit from opportunities to participate in the small group read to strategy are:

1. those students for whom oral English presents some specific challenges; and/or
2. those students for whom text comprehension proves difficult because their listening comprehension is not sufficiently developed.
For students for whom oral English presents some specific challenges, the text selection is based on selecting text structures that are matched to the receptive oral language competencies of the students in the group. This in fact means that the texts used need to be very simple. For pre-emergent students who are not yet reading, the texts selected for ‘read to’ would be level 1 and 2, and levels 2 and 3 for early emergent readers.

For students for whom text comprehension proves difficult because their listening comprehension is not sufficiently developed, the text selection needs to be more complex. That is, these students need to listen to more complex texts being read to them. These students should be exposed to texts that are three to four levels higher than their independent reading level. The reading provides models of phrasing, fluency and intonation. It allows students the opportunity to engage in discussion before and after the reading, which helps them to listen during the reading. The instructional strategy of ‘read to’ allows the students to focus on the listening and on building meaning.

Before reading the book, teachers help students activate prior knowledge so they are able to make links between what they know and the new information they are receiving. The questioning and discussion before and after the reading of the book helps students to understand the elements of text. Students are supported in developing an appreciation of narrative structure: setting, plot, sequence, characterisation, and values embedded within a story. Similarly, students are encouraged to respond strategically when reading expository texts. Teachers’ questions aid students in exploring elements such as: text features, specialised vocabulary, syntax and diagrams. This assists students in processing and accessing information.

For students who are used to the teacher stopping after every page and discussing the pictures, this new focus on listening will require some practice. The text selection is the key to this small group instructional strategy. It is imperative that teachers read the text before presenting to the students and that they keep the reading as uninterrupted as possible to encourage focused listening and meaning building.

**Guided reading**

In CLaSS schools Guided Reading provides a daily opportunity for teachers to help small groups of students (6–8) to talk, read, and think their way purposefully through a text, making possible an early introduction to silent reading. This instructional strategy is crucial to enabling students to become fluent, established readers. Guided reading is defined in CLaSS as an instructional strategy for students who are able to read a minimum text level of 1 at 90–94% accuracy using a running record on unseen text. In CLaSS we believe that students must be able to read to engage in guided reading.

In Guided Reading teachers support a small group of students as they use the strategies modelled in shared reading to read the text independently. In guided reading, each student is responsible for gaining and maintaining meaning, controlling the choice of strategies and the ways and degree to which accuracy is achieved. The teacher observes, anticipates (offering prompts), questions strategies, or suggests alternatives only when it is obvious that the reader is in danger of losing meaning, becoming frustrated, or likely to meet failure. It is a time to help students learn more about how to read, as well as what to do with what they read. The teacher’s role is crucial in both preparing for the session and in teaching,
observing, and supporting each individual student during the teaching session. The goal is to have all students read increasingly more complex texts – fiction and non-fiction – and develop strategies that they can use independently across the curriculum.

**Grouping and Frequency**

Guided reading involves grouping students at similar stages of reading development or who need similar strategies for reading success. Groups can also be based on interests and experiences. The important factor is that the groups are changed regularly (flexible grouping), as students develop at different rates and as teachers identify individual needs through assessment and monitoring. CLaSS supports teachers with a broad range of assessment tools and ongoing monitoring processes help them to find the starting points of instruction and for tracking student progress. The Reading Focus Sheet developed by CLaSS is a practical way for teachers to plan, assess and evaluate as they work with students.

CLaSS teachers understand that establishing groups that work is an evolving process. The benefit of guided reading is that it allows teachers to structure the session for maximum benefit for each student in the group. Knowledge of the instructional text level of each student allows the teachers to break the reading at appropriate points to check comprehension.

Most teachers find that they can manage four to five groups comfortably in terms of text selection and small group rotations. Early-emergent students should be seen frequently for short guided reading sessions (15 minutes, twice per week) along with reading to and oral language-reading instructional strategies in the same week. Established readers can be seen less frequently but for longer stretches of time (20–30 minutes approximately, twice a week). Teachers must decide which groups of students are ready to read the selected book, then they must choose the focus of the guided reading based on student needs.

**Choosing an Appropriate Text**

Just as important as the correct grouping of the students is the selection of an appropriate text. Text selection and the choice of an appropriate teaching focus or focuses should take about ten minutes prior to the session. Guided reading is primarily about building meaning. Guided reading is not a time to focus on word attack skills or large amounts of problem solving at the word level – this should occur during shared reading and the writing block. The text should reflect the students’ experiences and interests and the students should be able to read the texts with their current range of strategies with scaffolding from the teacher.

At the same time, the texts should contain sufficient new challenges to further students’ learning as they read. Learning will only take place when the students are sufficiently scaffolded so that they can go from the known to the unknown. Construction of the text meaning can be built as the session progresses. It is crucial that the text has a minimum of new learning so that the readers can problem-solve at the word and text level.

Once the text level is selected then the next step is the completion of the Reading Focus sheet. Through the use of guided reading, CLaSS teachers find that students not only learn how to read, they also learn what to do with what they read. This instructional strategy is based on ensuring that students understand what they read and become strategic and reflective readers.
Writing

To understand and effectively teach developing writers from a range of diverse backgrounds, CLaSS teachers must understand the difference between written word and spoken language. In spoken language, the speakers rely heavily on shared or contextual understandings. Spoken language also makes use of body language, which supports and adds meaning to the spoken word. Spoken language also allows the listener to ask questions of the speaker in order to clarify anything that is not understood.

In written language, however, writers must make the meaning clear to the reader without a shared, face-to-face or immediate context. Sentences must include a higher proportion of content words (nouns, verbs, adjectives and so on). The words used must be far more specific; details of the setting, events, and objects must be clearly described. Generally speaking, readers are unable to query writers when something is unclear.

CLaSS believes that reading and writing are reciprocal processes. When we read, we make meaning of someone else’s thoughts; when we write, we construct meaningful messages from our own thoughts for someone else to read. In teaching literacy skills, reading and writing are reciprocal skills. Writing requires students to operate at different levels of text construction, not only with letter sounds, letter clusters, and words, but also with sentences, paragraphs, and whole texts.

Separate workshops have been developed for Reading and Writing not because there is a belief that the two are mutually exclusive, but as a way to focus the instruction. It is always the concern of CLaSS that the lowest 25% of students are given as many opportunities to connect with the instruction as possible. There are many opportunities to write during the reading workshop and many opportunities to read during the writing workshop, but the teaching focuses are carefully crafted to highlight a specific area of instruction during each block of time.

The Writing Process

Writing is a process that includes many stages. It is important that both the teacher and the students understand what is involved in the process of constructing text. During the CLaSS daily writing block teachers clarify for students the differences between the authorial aspect of writing (planning, composing, revising) and the secretarial aspect of writing (recording and publishing) (Peters and Smith, 1993).

Authorial

The authorial role deals with the organisation of ideas and information to communicate to a known audience. The authorial aspect of writing has three main phases:

1. **Planning** which involves the generation of ideas. During this phase, writers consider the purpose of the text, the intended audience and the most appropriate text type. Not every writing task requires formal planning. Teachers need to model a range of planning approaches, such as brainstorming, creating lists, graphic organisers and so on.
2. **Composing** requires writers to go from an idea to a message. This is done through a series of actions: selecting an image or a message, developing a clear sense of purpose, ordering thoughts and ideas, anticipating the needs of the audience, and choosing words and sentences to convey meaning.

3. **Revising** is the process through which writers improve and extend their texts. During this phase, writers have the opportunity to reflect on or modify their writing. This phase may also include the revision of the original purpose. Competent writers revise as they are writing and composing. The extent to which a writer revises a text depends upon their ability to analyse how successfully the piece conveys the intended message. As writers become more competent at revising and refining their work, they become increasingly more adept at moving between the phases of the authorial process.

Being the author requires:
- Communicating ideas, feelings, or information
- Identifying audience
- Knowing how to use writing to reflect experiences and ideas
- Being able to record written messages and then reflect on the writing, alone or with others
- Acknowledging the need to edit or modify the original text in order to clarify ideas

**Secretarial**

Naturally, students are engaged in recording as they go through the planning, composing and revising phases. However, their main focus during these authorial stages is the thought process. The secretarial role deals with the surface features of writing and occurs mainly during the recording and publishing phases of the writing process.

Learning the secretarial aspect of writing requires:
- Perceiving the needs of the reader
- Having the skills to present the writing to the audience
- Recognising that a text must be understood by others
- Being able to identify spelling mistakes
- Having a process for successfully learning correct spelling
- Knowing that punctuation helps a reader make sense of the writing

The secretarial aspect of writing has two main phases:

1. **Recording** requires the writer to actually document their ideas and messages. Writers must learn to use formal conventions such as spelling, grammar, and punctuation effectively so that the texts they construct can be read and understood.

2. **Publishing** involves the preparation of the text for presentation to an audience. Students need a wide variety of media through which to publish their work, such as posters, articles, audio-cassettes, computer documents, and so on. Publishing allows writers to demonstrate their skills in spelling, grammar, legibility, text layout and presentation. Initially the audience may include other students, the teacher and parents. Publishing also elicits a response from the audience/or reader, which often motivates further writing.
Initially many CLaSS students (and teachers and parents) thought that good writers were those who have proven their mastery of the surface features of text writing (secretarial aspects). They valued neatness and correct spelling over the ability to convey feelings, information or ideas. To remedy this imbalance, it was crucial to provide purposeful writing experiences. When students communicate with a real purpose in mind they become more attentive to the authorial aspect of their work. There is a balance between both aspects when an accomplished writer constructs texts.

The classroom-writing program outlined in CLaSS provides a framework for best practice. The writing block is part of the daily two-hour literacy block. The timing of each segment is crucial to keeping the instruction focused, lively, and appropriately paced. The structure of the one-hour writing block is broadly as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Writing Block</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Whole-Class Focus:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing (15 minutes)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher-selected instructional focus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small-Group Focus:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing (35 minutes)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Student-centred and teacher selected instructional focus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whole-Class Focus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Share (10 minutes)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Student-centred and teacher selected focus</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There are five key instructional strategies used in the writing block:

1. Modelled writing
2. Shared writing
3. Language experience – writing
4. Interactive writing, and
5. Guided writing

CLaSS teachers use the assessments of writing to determine the most effective writing instructional strategy for each group.

As students progress towards independent writing the role of the teacher changes. Modelled writing requires the greatest support, with the teacher taking responsibility for the generation and recording of the thoughts. This strategy is designed to expose students to the models of proficient writers. Guided writing, on the other hand, has an expectation that students are already underway with text construction and that they take responsibility for the generation of ideas and the recording of the text. It provides the least support in the secretarial aspects and allows for the students to extend their learning in the authorial aspects of their writing development.

**Modelled writing**

The writing workshop begins with a whole-class focus and each day the teacher decides whether to make use of either modelled writing or shared writing. In modelled writing, the teacher provides a model of a proficient writer in progress. Teachers engage in meaningful writing tasks to provide that proficient model. Aspects of the writing process (planning, composing, recording, revising and publishing) are demonstrated while the thinking on these aspects is made explicit.
Students need to understand their role as observers. Before they begin writing teachers explain to the students why this strategy has been chosen, what text types are going to be used and what aspect of the writing process is to be modelled. This is not a shared construction and the teacher refrains from interacting with the students in the construction of the text. The students are the observers of the writing process in action. This is the best instructional strategy for introducing text types/genre and for focusing on particular aspects of the writing process.

**Shared writing**

Shared writing, as the name implies, is a shared construction of text. The ideas come from both the teacher and the students. The teacher holds the pen while the teacher and the students work on the composition. In shared writing the teacher and the students collaborate to construct a text, discussing and negotiating topics, ideas and word choices. It is therefore different from modelled writing and teachers need to understand the specific rationale for each approach. In both modelled and shared writing, the teacher needs to be aware of the different parts of the writing process as well as different genres of writing, and ensure that students are exposed to a variety of each.

Shared writing has the greatest emphasis on the composing phase of the writing process. The recording aspects are attended to during the mini-lesson section of the whole-class focus. The mini-lesson is a short teaching session, focused on demonstrating a specific aspect of writing. It may include the following elements: aspects of the conventions of writing, handwriting, spelling or a dimension of the writer’s craft.

**Language experience-writing**

As part of the writing workshop and within small-group focus sessions, language experience-writing is used for those pre-emergent writers who need extra support in their attempts to get under way in their writing. The language experience-writing strategy emphasises the link between thinking and language. It introduces the students to the concept that print carries a consistent message and refocuses the students’ attention on making meaning from text.

It was a deliberate decision by CLaSS to separate the language experience instructional strategy into two parts: reading and writing. This decision was made after two years of research in the Early Literacy Research Project (ELRP) where language experience was taught as a combined strategy. It was found that the most needy language students were overwhelmed with the amount of new learning in these language experience sessions and that their progress was impeded by over teaching.

In language experience-writing, the teacher writes the more difficult parts, while the students write the parts that the teacher is confident that they can manage. This allows individual students to focus on the thoughts and ensures that the text content is not limited to what the student has under control in the formal aspects of recording. The teacher and the students have a conversation, which leads to the recording of a written text. Students soon learn that what they think, they can say; what they say, they can (with support) write down; and what they write can be read and reread. Texts they write can form the basis of what they read independently.
Language experience can be an individual process within the small group or it can be a joint language experience piece.

**Interactive writing**

During interactive writing, teachers and students compose large-print texts on chart-paper. While there is some authorial work to be done, students mainly focus on developing the secretarial aspect of writing. CLaSS believes that this instructional strategy is best used as a small-group process, as this allows the teacher to focus on the specific needs of students requiring a high degree of support.

During this session, the teacher and students work jointly to establish the purpose for writing and the structure of the text. They also think and talk about the topic to be expanded in the text. The group finally collaborates to compose and write the text (or part of it) sentence-by-sentence, focusing on the recording aspect of the writing process.

The purpose of interactive writing is to provide opportunities for students to work on new and unknown words within familiar contexts and with the support of the teacher. This strategy provides the bridge between oral language – writing and guided writing.

During interactive writing it is helpful to have each of the students’ writing in a different colour felt pen. Have the students write their name at the top of the large sheet and put the date on the top of the paper so as to have a collection of the students’ work.

**Guided writing**

CLaSS believes that a student must be able to write before working in a guided writing group. It is much more powerful to have less able students working in language experience-writing, small group shared writing and interactive writing. Guided writing is most commonly used during the small-group focus section of the writing workshop for those students who are under way with writing. The teacher facilitates, guides, responds to and extends the students’ thinking in the process of writing text. The students hold the pen and do the writing. Each individual creates an individual piece of writing.

Guided writing is only effective after the students have been exposed to many models and demonstrations of the writing process and have seen a proficient writer in action through modelled and shared writing.

This is the ‘writing conference’ in action. Guided writing may be used to further support the students in their use of aspects of the writing process demonstrated by the teacher during the whole-class focus session. Guided writing differs from independent writing in that the students are constructing the text while being guided by the teacher.

The students generally come to guided writing with a clear sheet of paper and construct their writing during the session. Sometimes the students come to the session with texts already under construction so that the group may focus on the secretarial aspects of recording and revising. Alternatively they may work on the publishing aspect.
Independent writing

This is the main activity when the students are not involved in the small-group focus section of the writing workshop. Students write in an independent manner and there are no restrictions on the content or quality of the writing, as these are matters that can be attended to later in a roving conference or during guided writing sessions. It is essential that expectations and routines be clearly established for those students who are not involved in the small-group teaching. The whole-class focus and guided writing sessions will continue to provide strong models of writing behaviours which will support the students when they write independently. Students need many opportunities to write for sustained periods of time. Regardless of the stage of development, they need to experiment with the authorial process of construction of meaning and the secretarial aspect of recording text, as well as being involved in authentic writing purposes.

As part of the CLaSS professional development model, explicit teaching using all of the above strategies is incorporated within the daily two-hour literacy teaching block. Oral language is seen as the overriding umbrella for each section of the literacy block.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Whole-class Focus</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The daily reading workshop begins with a whole-class focus that is based on the Shared reading strategy. Shared reading can consist of books, charts, poems, songs, etc. The daily writing workshop begins with a whole-class focus that consists of either Modelled writing or Shared writing. This element of the classroom program sets the scene for the workshop, providing an initial teaching focus and a specific teaching of the visual information of print, including direct instruction in phonics. This is a teacher-directed time. A mini-lesson, a 10-minute segment of the whole-class focus – Writing – is a time to attend to direct instruction of spelling, phonics and phonemic awareness.</td>
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<tr>
<th><strong>Small-group Teaching Focus</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>This section of both the reading and writing workshop focuses on explicit teaching within small groups. During the reading workshop the strategies of reading to children, language experience–reading and guided reading take place at the same time that learning centres are in operation for the remainder of the class. During the writing workshop the teaching strategies of language experience – writing, interactive writing and guided writing take place while the remainder of the class are engaged in independent writing and various other activities included to extend the students’ understandings of grammar and spelling. This is a time for students to take responsibility for large sections of their learning time.</td>
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<tr>
<th><strong>Whole-class Focus: Sharing</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>This is the concluding section of both the reading and writing workshops and it is a time for reflection when students articulate what they have learnt. This share time draws the workshop to a close and the teacher concludes the formal reading and writing components for the day. This also is a teacher-directed time.</td>
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</table>

Figure 2. Structure of the daily two-hour literacy teaching block