Towards a model for writing in French Immersion language arts: Using best practices and professional learning communities

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Content
This action research study involves the identification, observation and analysis of best practices in literacy as presented in the academic literature as well as in the lived experiences of the classroom teachers involved. Specific issues related to best practices in the teaching of writing in French Immersion are discussed including how the L1 literature was used and adapted in a L2 learning context. The role of Professional Learning Communities (PLC) and, in particular, findings regarding the importance of teachers as leaders and shared construction of knowledge are presented.

Facts
• The writing model is made up of 5 stages:
  - Presentation of the writing project
  - Modeled writing
  - Shared writing
  - Interactive writing
  - Independent writing
• PLCs promoted democratic dialogue; teachers were engaged and active participants in the process and shared a common vision.
• Professional dialogue about writing transferred from PLC discussions to the staffroom and other contexts including out-of-school settings.
• Teachers co-constructed the writing model and experimented to identify best practices in teaching L2 writing.
• The coherent and consistent organization of the instructional model as well as the inherent scaffolding led to growth in learner confidence.
• The writing model allowed for development of learner autonomy and differentiation practices.
Second language writers, as compared to first language writers:
- Create shorter texts
- Use more simplistic sentence structures
- Use a reduced vocabulary
- Make more mistakes
- Take longer to compose
- Have access to limited strategies and linguistic competence
- Need three times more time to plan

First four phases of the model provides the necessary planning time for L2 writers and for struggling writers.

Effective PLCs contribute to a meaningful way to the co-construction of knowledge and the on-going professional dialogue necessary for the enhancement of best practice.

Teachers at both the elementary and middle schools reported that the writing model was useful and an effective way to plan units focused on the teaching of genre writing and provided a clearly defined, but flexible framework for scaffolded instruction of writing.

Fact sheet series

The Bilingualism in a Plurilingual Canada video clips and fact sheet series is an initiative brought to you by the Official Languages and Bilingualism Institute (OLBI) of the University of Ottawa in partnership with the Canadian Association of Second Language Teachers (CASLT).

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The goal of this initiative is to make current research in second language teaching and learning available to teachers and the general public.

All video clips and fact sheets from this series can be downloaded from the CASLT and OLBI Web sites.

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