

Writing in social sciences, Level 3

Making a difference

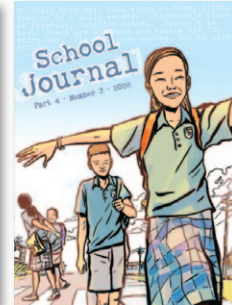
Overview

This resource provides examples of purposeful curriculum learning within the social sciences context of making a difference, but the primary focus is on the planning and teaching of the writing skills and knowledge that support students' learning in this context. Refer to Teaching Writing across the Curriculum in Years 4–6 for more information about using writing across the curriculum.

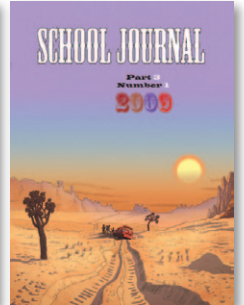
These materials use texts from the Ministry of Education's instructional series to support the curriculum learning and the writing tasks. The selected texts have themes that relate to the context of making a difference.



School Journal
Part 1 Number 3
2007



School Journal
Part 4 Number 3
2008



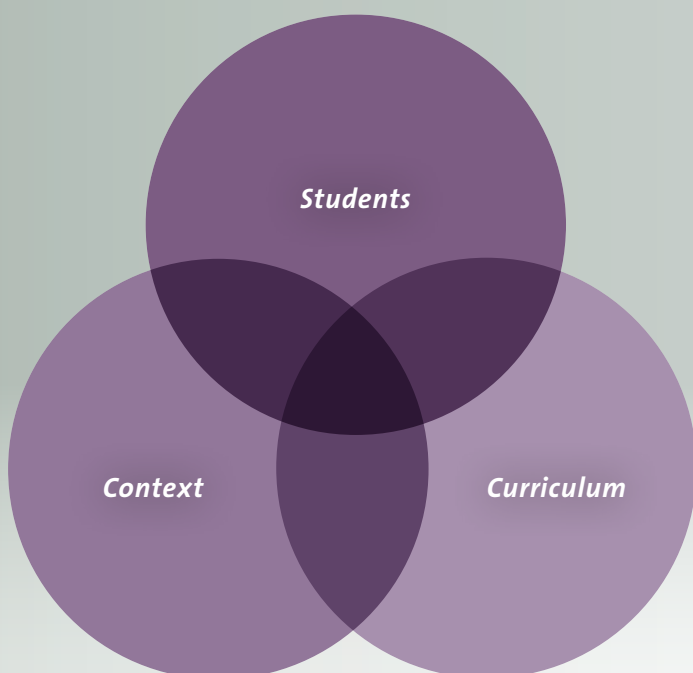
School Journal
Part 3 Number 1
2009

Three aspects of planning

When planning, consider:

- the big ideas that underpin the New Zealand Curriculum and the big ideas contained in the social sciences curriculum
- the relevance of the topics and contexts for your students
- the learning strengths and needs of your students.

These three aspects of planning (curriculum, context, and the students' learning strengths and needs in the particular focus areas – see the diagram below) are integral and reciprocal. They naturally overlap, and so learning tasks and activities address all three aspects. It is the point where the planning starts that may vary.



Students' literacy strengths and needs

Writing

What skills and knowledge do my students bring to the learning?
What support will my students need to:

- create relevant content?
- use text structures and language features appropriate to their purpose and audience?
- select and use tools to plan and organise ideas and information to meet their writing purpose?
- use vocabulary that clearly conveys ideas, experiences, and information?

Context (for inquiry and learning)

People who make a difference in adversity

Big idea: People can make a positive difference to their community and the wider world through individual and collective action.

- People sometimes risk their own lives and make sacrifices in order to stand by their values and beliefs for the wider good of their families and communities.
- People demonstrate strong personal qualities and sacrifice personal comfort to help others survive.

Curriculum

Social sciences

- Continuity and Change: Learn about past events, experiences, and actions and the changing ways in which these have been interpreted over time.
- Social studies: Understand how people remember and record the past in different ways.

Texts that support the theme of making a difference

School Journal, Part 1 Number 3, 2007 – “Helping to Win the War” (article)

Relevant theme:

- People sometimes risk their own lives and make sacrifices in order to stand by their values and beliefs for the wider good of their families and communities.

School Journal, Part 4 Number 3, 2008 – “Boy Soldiers” (article)

Relevant theme:

- People sometimes risk their own lives and make sacrifices in order to stand by their values and beliefs for the wider good of their families and communities.

School Journal, Part 3 Number 1, 2009 – “Spitfires from Tonga” (article)

Relevant theme:

- People demonstrate qualities such as courage, perseverance, endurance, and sacrifice of personal comfort to help others survive.

Texts related by theme

School Journal, Part 2 Number 1, 2006 – “Great-grandpa”

School Journal, Part 4 Number 2, 2009 – “The Gestapo’s Most Wanted” (article)

Overview of social sciences concepts

Concepts are embedded in all the social sciences achievement objectives across the four conceptual strands of the New Zealand Curriculum. They are an essential part of teaching and learning in social sciences.

For information about social inquiry in the social sciences curriculum and the four conceptual strand see: ssol.tki.org.nz/social_studies_years_1_10/teaching_and_learning/effective_teaching_in_social_studies/building_conceptual_understandings

Texts	Text features and structure	Supporting strategies
<i>School Journal 1.3.07 – “Helping to Win the War”</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction written in third person • First-person recount – an older person talking about the past • Use of the past tense • Indicators of time; for example, “I remember”, “During”, “After”, “One day”, “About a year after”, “When”. 	<p>Help the students to know what to expect: the text is described as an article but the main part is written as a story – a personal recount.</p>
<i>School Journal 4.3.08 – “Boy Soldiers”</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of quotations that help the reader understand how the men felt as boys and as soldiers • The vivid descriptions (“wildly enthusiastic”, “the rumbles and flashes were like Ngāuruhoe erupting”, “feeling like ‘gun fodder’ ”) • The quotes from Stan and Len (“the only place I felt at home was in the pub”, “I could hear the shells wailing and the machine guns firing”, “I have felt nothing more than a corpse floating in a shell hole of stagnant water”) • The extract from the poem published in the 1914 School Journal, which reflects the feelings of Stan and Len before going to war • The use of adverbial phrases and clauses as indicators of time (“in May 1916”, “During the next three years”, “When they weren’t fighting”) 	<p>Explain that there are parallel stories in the text, describing the experiences of two different men.</p> <p>Create a graphic organiser that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • helps the students to identify and focus on the key aspects and/or features of the text • will feed into their writing.
<i>School Journal 3.1.09 – “Spitfires from Tonga”</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The historical (Second World War) context in Tonga • The idea that history can be conveyed in different ways • The theme of community response in a time of crisis and the idea that Tonga’s response to the war was very significant, particularly for such a tiny nation • The use of questions to begin the text and engage the reader • The mixture of photographs and illustrations to show the historical events • The clear point of view and celebratory tone of the text. 	<p>Make a chart of the text features with the students, annotating specific parts. Focus on particular features such as tense, tone, structure, vocabulary, and visual supports.</p> <p>Support the students to ask and answer questions (oral and written) or to provide written responses to the text. Give them graphic organisers to help them to identify and use key information and/or features.</p>

Instructional Focus: Writing

Begin by describing for your students the sort of writing they will be doing to support their learning. As a way of creating an authentic learning experience, students could then share these texts with the wider community by using an online publishing solution – for example, a wiki or a Google website.

Three learning processes

The writing tasks described below relate to three learning processes:

1. finding and recording information
2. exploring values and perspectives
3. considering responses and decisions.

1. Finding and recording information

Support the students to gather information through reading and responding to texts (both fiction and non-fiction, as well as other online texts) about people making a difference in times of adversity. As they read and respond to the ideas and information, help them to develop questions about the personal qualities people demonstrate when helping others.

Writing demands	Prompts to support planning
<p>The writing demands when finding and recording information from reading and research include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • generating relevant questions • using key words, phrases, comments, and reflections to record and note down relevant information from a range of texts and sources • organising information using specific formats (such as graphic organisers) or by writing short paragraphs to describe their responses and to clarify the ideas and information. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do my students know about “times of adversity”? If we have never experienced war, how do we relate to those who have? What sort of events would be tough for us? Am I clear about what I want them to learn? • Have I acknowledged the experiences of all students, being sensitive to those who may have experienced war or other traumatic events, such as earthquakes, in their own lives? • Do my students know how to ask relevant questions, find information, and integrate ideas and information across texts? • What recording graphic organisers will support them best when gathering information? Will these be digital? • What do my students know about expressing what they think and feel? • What specific writing knowledge and skills, or processes and strategies, do I need to teach them? • What type of language (for example, verb forms we use when hypothesising about past events) do students need to use in their writing, and how can I support them in this?

Task: Students think about and record ideas and information

Students Possible responses to the task	Teacher Possible deliberate acts of teaching										
<p>Students collate and record information from texts.</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Text</th> <th>My questions and comments</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Boy Soldiers</td> <td>Why did Stan think it would be fun? Why did Len burn his uniform? I think Len and Stan had a tough time. I would be scared if I had to fight in a war.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Spitfires from Tonga</td> <td>What did they do to raise money? What sacrifices did families make? How did they make airplanes from old metal?</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Helping to Win the War</td> <td>How did they get the truck to the soldiers? How come the food didn't go rotten? Did the food get to everyone? I bet the children were proud of themselves.</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>My question is do people have to make sacrifices and be brave to help people?</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>English language learners would benefit from a graphic organiser that breaks information down a little more. It could have a table with columns for action/reason/feelings/questions. Note that the text might not always give them information for the second and third columns or might require them to make inferences.</p>	Text	My questions and comments	Boy Soldiers	Why did Stan think it would be fun? Why did Len burn his uniform? I think Len and Stan had a tough time. I would be scared if I had to fight in a war.	Spitfires from Tonga	What did they do to raise money? What sacrifices did families make? How did they make airplanes from old metal?	Helping to Win the War	How did they get the truck to the soldiers? How come the food didn't go rotten? Did the food get to everyone? I bet the children were proud of themselves.		My question is do people have to make sacrifices and be brave to help people?	<p>Prompt the students to ask and record questions, during reading, about what inspired people and led to their decisions and actions in times of adversity. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What does the text tell us about Len and Stan's decision to go to war? • What doesn't it tell us? What do you want to know more about? • What did the people in Tonga do that showed personal sacrifice? • There is a lot we have to infer. What are your questions about how life might have been for the people of Tonga during the war? • Write down what you think would have been difficult for them.
Text	My questions and comments										
Boy Soldiers	Why did Stan think it would be fun? Why did Len burn his uniform? I think Len and Stan had a tough time. I would be scared if I had to fight in a war.										
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Helping to Win the War	How did they get the truck to the soldiers? How come the food didn't go rotten? Did the food get to everyone? I bet the children were proud of themselves.										
	My question is do people have to make sacrifices and be brave to help people?										

Students recount a difficult moment from their own life.

A time that I found tough was when I took my cousins for a walk in the bush and my 2 year old cousin fell down a bank. She banged her head on a rock and it was bleeding. She cried a lot and I didn't know what to do. It was getting dark and I knew everyone would be worried. I couldn't leave her but I needed help. My other cousins were crying too and there was no one to help. I didn't know what to do. I just picked her up and ran until I found other people and asked for help. It was hard cos my other cousins couldn't keep up with me.

Students respond to the ideas and information in a text.

I think it must have been hard work for the people in Tonga to raise a lot of money for the spitfires. I think they probably didn't have much money and they might have had to go without things. This would have sacrificed a lot.

At first I didn't think that the children raising money for the canteen truck had to do very much. But then I realised that they had to do gardening instead of playing games and enjoying themselves. If I had to do that every day, it would be a sacrifice.

What the writing shows

The students use their own experiences to connect with the experiences of the people they read about by asking questions and making comments, such as “I would be scared if I had to fight in a war”, “What sacrifices did families make?”, and “I couldn't leave her but I needed help.” They also convey some personal qualities of people who deal with situations in times of adversity by describing their actions (“I think they probably didn't have much money and they might have had to go without things. This would have sacrificed a lot”, “I knew everyone would be worried ... I just picked her up and ran until I found other people and asked for help”).

Share models of personal storytelling – moments from your own life or other people's lives when they have faced things that seemed tough to deal with, for example, being afraid of the dark, getting sick, getting hurt, going to hospital, getting lost, being bullied.

Ask questions to make links to prior knowledge, such as:

- Think of a time when you had to do something you were afraid of or a situation when you were scared.
- To describe this moment clearly for others, what information is the most relevant?
- What structure and language will be best for sharing your personal story?

Build on knowledge gathered during reading and make links between the reading and the writing.

Explain the use of different modal verbs to express degrees of probability in the past.

- Sometimes we want to make guesses, or talk about what we think happened, when describing an event in the past. One way to do this is to use modal verbs, such as “might” and “would”. These verbs add to other verbs, so we can say “might have been”, “would have sacrificed”, and so on. These words express a “possible” rather than an “actual” situation.

Make sure the students understand that we use “might” to show we think something was possible and “would” to show we think it was true. For English language learners who are not able to deal with making sentences using these verb forms, you could explore using adjectives and adverbs such as “probable” and “possible”, and “probably” and “possibly”.

Give feedback on the students' choice of:

- structure and language choices appropriate for asking useful questions or making pertinent comments
- content and language choices to convey the qualities of people dealing with a difficult situation.

2. Exploring values and perspectives

The students use the information they have gathered (through research and reading) about people making a difference in times of adversity to make comparisons with people and situations in their own lives. They reflect on the sacrifices and tough decisions people make and develop an understanding of the extra difficulties people face during times of adversity.

Writing demands	Prompts to support planning
<p>The writing demands when exploring values and perspectives include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> describing and explaining the actions taken by people in their whānau or communities who have “stepped up” in times of adversity writing fictional stories that portray the personal qualities people demonstrate to help others in times of adversity. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What sort of writing will best communicate the students’ responses to the ideas we are reading about and discussing? What do they know about communicating these ideas to others? What do they know about the language features and structures that will best support this writing? How might I teach the knowledge and skills they require?

Task: Students make sense of ideas and information

Students Possible responses to the task	Teacher Possible deliberate acts of teaching
<p>Students record information about a person’s actions.</p> <p><i>During the floods last year, our neighbor, Mrs. Reihana helped everybody in our street. She knocked on our door and then she asked us if we needed help. She had a big bag with pies and things like that. We couldn’t stay in our house. either When we went to the school hall, she gave me and mum blankets and even a sleeping bag. We all had to sleep on the floor. Mrs. Reihana asked us if we were cold and when we said yes she got us a hot water bottle. I think she was very kind and looked after us during a difficult time. She is quite old, and sometimes not well, but she was more interested in helping us than worrying about how bad she felt.</i></p> <p>Students write a short fictional story.</p> <p><i>It was a hot day and the sun baked the earth. and everything was quiet. Suddenly there was a massive earthquake. Everything shook like crazy. My heart was pounding with fear. I started crying but then Carlo came running inside and grabbed me and said we have to run fast there’s a tsunami coming, and we did. We ran towards the hill but I kept feeling over. Carlo picked me up and carried me and dragged me. It was hard work and I was terrified and he kept nearly feeling over but he kept going. His arms were akeing and his back was braking but he kept going ...</i></p> <p>What the writing shows</p> <p>Both these examples show the students’ understanding of the personal qualities of generosity, courage, and perseverance. They imply these qualities through the description of the actions taken by the people – real and imagined. In the first example, the student’s choice of content and vocabulary emphasises these qualities (“She is quite old, and sometimes not well, but she was more interested in helping us than worrying about how bad she felt.”). In particular, the student alludes to a sense of sacrifice with the last statement. In the second example, the student’s choice of “akeing” and “braking” imply Carlo’s courage and perseverance.</p>	<p>Prompt the students to think about people in their whānau and wider communities who have made a positive difference to other people’s lives. Explore how writers describe and report such information. Help the students to identify and explain the use of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> setting – time, place facts related to the event description of actions use of past tense sentences containing adverbial or adjectival phrases and clauses to provide detail. <p>Ask the students to think, pair, and share to orally describe what a person did to help others during a difficult time. Have them write paragraphs describing the situation, what the person did, and what effect the person’s actions had on them. English language learners may benefit from a more explicit analysis of the structure. Model how to take notes in a writing frame and how to develop these notes into paragraphs.</p> <p>Ask questions to help them clarify their ideas before they write.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is the most relevant content to include? What vocabulary will you use to describe what the person did? What is most important to describe about the effect of their actions – on themselves as well as others? <p>Explore a narrative in which the writer is describing a dangerous or difficult situation, where the characters have to step out of their comfort zone to help those around them. Focus closely on the content, structure, and language features the writer uses.</p> <p>Prompt the students to support the development of their stories.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is the big idea in your story? Remember what you know about the structure of a story. Think about the situation that will best demonstrate your main characters particular qualities of courage, kindness, bravery, or sacrifice. What language features do you need to use so that the reader really “sees” what is happening? Think about the best way of “showing not telling” what your characters do to reveal their courage, endurance, or kindness.

3. Considering responses and decisions

Design writing tasks that support the students to draw together what they have read, researched, learnt, and written about to help them consider how the people's decisions and responses people demonstrate in times of adversity have long-term effects on other people, their communities, and their country. Provide opportunities for them to make connections to their own lives and to the wider world. Decide how they will communicate their understanding through writing. Provide models to explore together, analyse, and use as examples to support their writing.

Writing demands	Prompts to support planning
<p>The writing demands when considering responses and decisions include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> describing and explaining the common qualities people demonstrate in times of adversity and how these qualities make a difference to other people's survival and/or safety explaining their understanding of the wider implications of people's actions through the descriptions, reflections, and conclusions they give about people who make a difference to others – both in the past and in the present. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have the students engaged with the material? Have the tasks and activities prompted them to inquire more deeply? What is the best way for them to communicate what they have learnt? What sort of writing would help them to creatively apply their knowledge and understanding?

Task: Students communicate their knowledge and understanding

Students Possible responses to the task	Teacher Possible deliberate acts of teaching
<p><i>What are the qualities of people who make a difference?</i></p> <p><i>In Boy Soldiers, Stan and Len made personal sacrifices like a nice home to fight in the war. They were scared and they thought they might die but they persevered. At first they thought it would be an adventure, but they soon realised that it was very dangerous. They must have been courageous to carry on in such bad conditions.</i></p> <p><i>In Spitfires for Tonga, the people made sacrifices to save money so the government could buy the airplanes. They would of gone without lots of things they needed, such as new clothes. They even melted down church bells to get the metal!</i></p> <p><i>In Helping to Win the War, the people showed perseverance because they sold their vegetables to raise money for the canteen truck. They made a real difference to the men in the army because they would have had nice food to eat while they were fighting the war. This would have made them feel that there whanau cared about them even though they were a long way from home.</i></p> <p><i>I think that there are people around who can make a difference to everyone in big ways and small ways. they make a difference when times are tough by helping people get through even when it is a risk to themselves. A big quality is that they don't think about themselves, and they only think about what to do to help others. If there weren't people like that, worse things would happen.</i></p>	<p>Support the students to use their notes, reading, and experiences to evaluate and integrate information about the decisions people make.</p> <p>Model how to plan and write for the purpose of describing and explaining the qualities of people who make a difference.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>When I think about how to describe and explain the qualities of people who make a difference, I start to organise my ideas into groups. This helps me to make sure that the main ideas and supporting details and information are clear and organised. For example, ...</i> <p>Explain and model how writers choose relevant detail in relation to their topics.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Notice how the writer has made her main points in the first three sentences. These ideas are developed in the following paragraphs, and she hasn't included anything that isn't irrelevant to her topic.</i> <p>Prompt the students to include their personal comments and reflections.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>What do you think would have been hard for all these people?</i> <i>What particular qualities do you think they demonstrated?</i> <i>Why do you think they did it?</i> <p>Give feedback to help the students link their writing to the big social sciences concepts.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>You've given examples of the sacrifices that all these people made. I get a good sense of your understanding of the big concepts we have been exploring.</i> <i>I agree with your statement that the underlying quality is that people don't think about themselves, only about helping others. That is what we have been discussing over the past few weeks, and you have explained it really clearly.</i>

What the writing shows

The student uses language of comparison to integrate information from several sources. The phrases "In Boy Soldiers", "In Spitfires for Tonga", "In Helping to Win the War" clearly position the comparison of one text with another. The use of "I think" and "A big quality is" show the student's understanding of the ideas and information as well as an appropriate way of portraying this information.