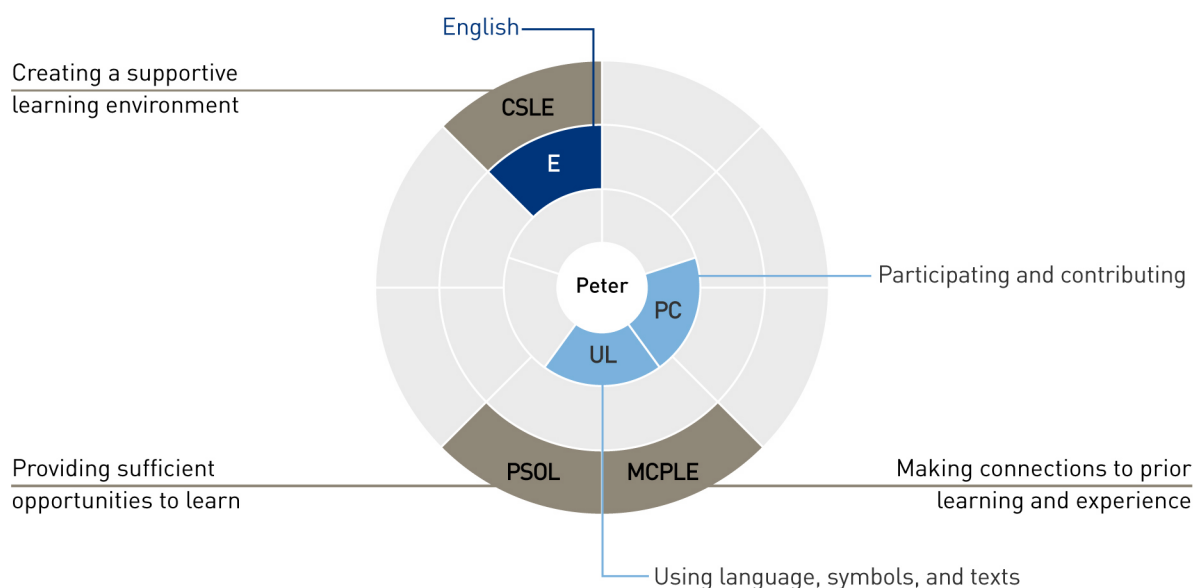


Peter said "I am a writer!"

Links to the curriculum



Student background

Name	Peter
Age	10
School	Primary

Peter's school receives ongoing and reviewable resourcing schemes (ORRS) funding of 2.5 hours per week and 7.5 hours teacher aide time per week to support Peter's learning. Peter has difficulty writing because of cerebral palsy.

The effects of epilepsy on his knowledge retention are not yet fully understood. During the past three years, he has learned to recognise a base of 17 sight words. Some days he can remember most of them, on other days he cannot remember how to spell his name. Although the examples in this learning story are handwritten, Peter now uses his own computer to produce stories within the classroom, as it is easier for him to type than to write. Peter is using a computer program (Clicker 5) which has text, accompanied by pictures, to remind him of what he has written. Over the 14-month period in which this string occurs, Peter had four changes of teacher. Those people who live and work with Peter recognise that he does not cope well with change.

Five learning stories

1. "I can write my name" 28 May 2007
2. "I am a writer" 11 June 2007
3. Peter uses visuals 30 June 2008
4. Peter the waiter 11 August 2008
5. Peter's notes 15 August 2008

This string of stories demonstrates Peter's increasing confidence in using text (both knowledge of text and skills in the use of text) to convey a message to others. Over a 14-month period, Peter demonstrates a shift from being able to read a small group of sight words to being able to use those words to convey a written message. Further to this, Peter begins to experiment with unfamiliar text, demonstrating an awareness of links between

oral, written, and visual language. This string also demonstrates Peter developing practical knowledge within the arts (drama).

"I can write my name"

Student	Peter	Date	28 May 2007
		Observer	Annie (ORRS teacher)

Learning goal

- Peter will use his name in a sentence.



Peter's classmates were completing their writing at their desks. Peter and I worked together at his desk. We practised writing the word "I", which Peter has been able to read this last term. I modelled "I" on Peter's whiteboard. He wrote this word six times. I wiped the board and said, "Can you write 'I'?" He wrote "I". I wrote the word "am", which Peter can read, but finds difficult to write. I then drew five small lines where the next word could go. Peter and I read the sentence "I am...". He picked up the pen and wrote "Peter" above the lines. I added a fullstop to Peter's sentence.

I said, "Wow, Peter, what does our sentence say?" He read, "I am Peter". I placed ticks above every letter Peter wrote independently and said, "Look how clever you are Peter. You nearly wrote this sentence on your own". He smiled at me. I said, "I am going to teach you how to write "am" and then I won't need to help you". Peter pointed to the words and said, "I am Peter". Peter was with me when I told Lisa, the teacher aide, how clever he was and that we both need to teach Peter "am" to help him write independently. Lisa and I are so proud of your efforts, Peter.

Analysis – what learning is happening here?

Key competencies

Using language, symbols, and texts

We were proud to see Peter using the small base of sight words he recognises to produce text.

Participating and contributing

Peter recognises writing as a community activity and wishes to be like his peers.

Managing self

In this activity, Peter demonstrates some independence in completing the task.

Learning areas

Level 1 English: Speaking, Writing, and Presenting

It was great to see Peter recognising sight words and showing some knowledge of text conventions.

Where to next?

We will teach Peter to write the word "am"; teach the use of a full stop; encourage any attempt at completing a word or sentence; and to model simple sentence structure daily.

What has Peter taught the adults working/living with him?

Peter has taught us to recognise the huge effort it requires for him to transfer the skill of reading and recognising a word to the skill of being able to write that word. He reminds us to value the tremendous efforts that recognising texts and symbols requires of him and to celebrate the success of every independent steps he takes in writing a sentence.

"I am a writer"

Student	Peter	Date	11 June 2007
		Observer	Annie (ORRS teacher)

Learning goal

- Peter will write a sentence that uses known sight words.

All the children were writing at their desks. Peter had his whiteboard in front of him. I drew three lines. I said, "Can you write I?" Peter wrote "I" above the first line. He looked at me. I smiled. I said, "Can you write 'am'?" He wrote "am" above the second line and stopped. He read "I am". He smiled. He wrote "Peter" and looked at me. He drew a fullstop. I smiled and said, "How did you get to be so clever? You have written a sentence. Read it to me please".



Peter read his sentence to me. He turned to me and said, "Annie, I am a writer". I was so proud of him. I said, "Yes, Peter, you are a writer". We shared this fabulous news and work with Peter's teacher. She got us to photocopy Peter's work and it went straight up on the wall with everyone's writing. Underneath Peter's sentence, his teacher wrote "Peter can write independently". Peter's teacher took him to read his story to everyone in his class and to the principal. Peter's classmates clapped and asked him to read it again. He is so proud of the principal's award he got. We photocopied his story for Mum and Da. Everyone thinks Peter is a great writer.

Analysis – what learning is happening here?

How fabulous to see Peter attempting a sentence. How wonderful to hear him declaring himself a writer, and a learner.

Key competencies

Participating and contributing

Peter demonstrated confidence in his ability and to take a risk. He was proud of being like everyone else in his class.

Learning areas

Level 1 English: Speaking, Writing, and Presenting

Peter was able to demonstrate a recognition and understanding of text structure.

Where to next?

The next steps will include providing opportunities for Peter to use the base of sight words he has to write simple sentences. We will incorporate Peter's knowledge to use simple sentences on topics his peers are studying with him. Opportunities for Peter to use photos and text to complete simple "I am..." sentences about people familiar to Peter will also be provided/incorporated.

What has Peter taught the adults working and living with him?

Peter continues to amaze us with his perseverance to complete a written sentence. We need to remember that sometimes being like everyone else is enough – that having his work on the wall is worth more to him than any of the goals we have set. We are learning to celebrate his moments of success. The moment where he has defined his role as a writer also defines his needs from us.

Peter uses visuals

Student	Peter	Date	30 June 2008
		Observer	Annie (ORRS teacher)

Learning goal

- Peter will write a story using known sight words and interest words.



Peter's class were at their desks writing their diaries. Peter said, "We are going on the train Annie". I said, "Yes we are Peter. Isn't it exciting?" We decided that the train was an exciting topic to write about. Peter got out his whiteboard and pen. He looked at me, looked away, and wrote "I". He stopped and wrote "am". He stopped and looked at me. I waited quietly. He looked away and cautiously wrote "g o i n g". He stopped for a minute, then wrote "on a".

He looked at me, smiled and put his hand over the whiteboard so I could not see what he was doing. He put the pen down and laughed. Peter said, "Look, Annie". I said, "Read your writing to me Peter". Peter pointed to his words as he read, "I am going on a train". He had drawn a train in place of the word train. I was so excited with this fabulous work that Peter and I shared his story with his class and his teacher.

We are so proud of you, Peter, for having spaces between your words, for remembering how to spell five sight words, and for drawing a train so we could read your work and understand it. We photocopied your work for Mum and Da to read at home.

Analysis – what learning is happening here?

Key competencies

Using language, symbols, and texts

We were excited to see Peter using known sight words independently in his writing.

Although we have used pictures in sentences with him, this is the first time he has used this skill to convey information in a way that others can understand.

Participating and contributing

Having a go at this task in class alongside his peers shows that Peter is comfortable within the class environment using symbols and texts to complete the same tasks as his peers.

Where to next?

The next steps will include providing Peter with more opportunities to expand his sentence writing through the use of known sight words and pictures so that he may be able to complete writing that is relevant to him and what is happening in his life.

What has Peter taught the adults working/living with him?

Peter has demonstrated to us that when he does not have the text to complete his writing he has a strategy (using pictures and symbols) that can support him getting his message across to his audience. His laughter at his cleverness in using this strategy shows an awareness of himself as a writer who can use a new skill.

An important consideration in this story and Peter's learning is the positive effect of waiting for Peter to complete tasks.

Peter the waiter

Student	Peter	Date	11 August 2008
		Observer	Francie (mother)

Learning goal

- Peter will use text in a meaningful way.

Mum had got the sausages out for tea, but Peter decided that he would like to cook them. Mum bravely decided to ignore the smoke that Peter's cooking usually evokes and let him. While tea was cooking, Peter came into the lounge where Mum and Da were sitting. He had a piece of paper and a pen. He said, "What would you like for tea? What would you like for dessert? What would you like for a drink? Da, do you want a beer or a cup of tea?" Peter had a sheet of paper and a pen. He wrote on the paper as if he was a waiter taking an order. Mum said, "What's on the menu?" Peter said, "You can read it". Mum looked at the menu, which was a jumble of letters that Peter can write. Mum said, "I don't know what to have". Mum and Da asked for a waiter's recommendation. Peter replied that sausages were the best deal on the menu and they were ordered. Peter wrote the orders down. Mum and Da could not read the orders, but Peter remembered what to do. The sausages were duly presented in a soup plate with a spoon. They were a Peter special wrapped in cheese. Yum.

Analysis – what learning is happening here?

Peter was able to use his knowledge and experience of restaurants and literacy skills to provide a menu and a meal for his parents in a setting as close to a café as possible.

Key competencies

Managing self

Peter was encouraged to have a go at completing a task and rose to the occasion (looking and waiting).

Learning areas

Level 1 English: Speaking, Writing, and Presenting: purposes and audiences, processes and strategies

Peter demonstrated an understanding that print has a message, which is important for making choices in this setting (restaurant). He was able to shape text for a purpose and audience. Peter is showing an awareness of a link between oral, visual and written language as he had a clear expectation that his text will be responded to, appreciated, and understood by his Mum and Da. This story also illustrates effective communication, imagination, and playfulness.

Where to next?

The school and family will work together to continue supporting Peter's knowledge of, and experimentation with, texts. We can use Peter's interest in cooking by providing visual recipe books that have both text and visuals to convey information. We can support Peter as he explores text in situations that convey his personal voice.

What has Peter taught the adults working/living with him?

Peter is showing us that he values independence and his attempts at independence are really important to him. He expects that we will understand and appreciate the efforts he has made to write and that they will be accepted as meaningful communications. He trusts that his efforts are valued by us.

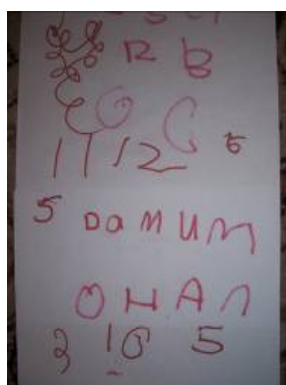
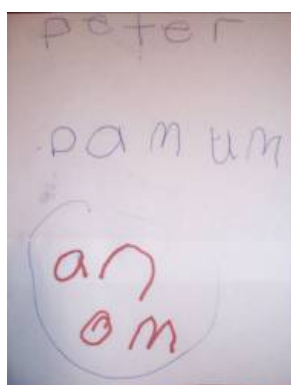
Peter's notes

Student	Peter	Date	15 August 2008
		Observer	Francie (mother)

Learning goal

- Peter will create text that has a purpose and relevance to a task he is undertaking.

Peter had made a spa out of a cardboard box and milo tin. Peter says that you fill the Milo tin with bubble bath mix. Using the shower tap, you spray the tin until the bubbles start to overflow into the bath that is already filled with water. You lie back and relax in the bath. Peter wrote a note to Mum and Da (left picture) to explain how the spa worked. When Mum and Da went to the bathroom to look at the spa, a second note (right picture) was taped to the bathroom door with instructions on how to use the spa. Mum and Da discussed the note with Peter to clarify his instructions. Peter demonstrated how the spa worked, making lots of bubbles and laughing. Peter was proud of his writing – and his spa!



Analysis – what learning is happening here?

Key competencies

Using language, symbols, and texts

Peter expects that Mum and Da value his efforts and he is happy to take the risk of attempting unfamiliar words within the home environment.

Learning areas

Level English: Speaking, Writing, and Presenting: purposes and audiences

Peter is proud of his attempts at communicating ideas and instructions to others.

Level 1 the arts: Understanding the Arts in Context: drama

Once again, Peter demonstrates imaginative play skills and relating to others.

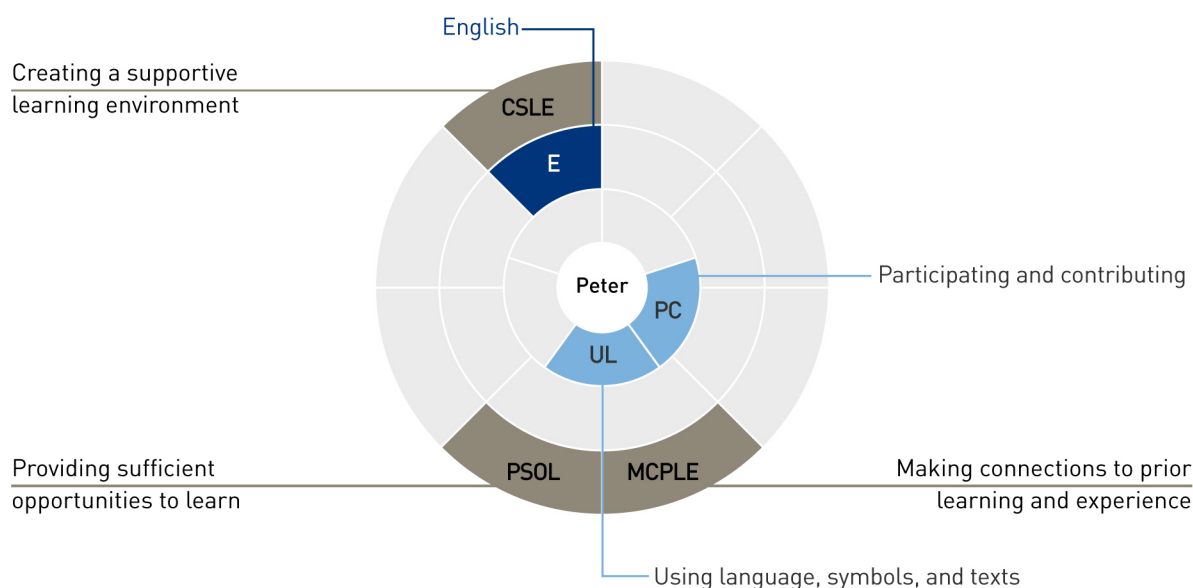
Where to next?

We will support Peter's attempts at writing by providing a range of visuals that may be used within his sentences and notes. We will encourage the correct use of basic sight words he knows within the work he does at home. We can use the experiences that Peter values within his home (writing menus, instructions) in his school work, encouraging teaching of further skills.

What has Peter taught the adults working/living with him?

Peter is teaching us that he will continue to persevere with print because he sees it has a purpose in his life. He is able to express his own voice through the use of print and is happy to take a risk in attempting unfamiliar words.

Reflection – what these stories exemplify



Key competencies

These stories show Peter as a member of his class being involved in the same activities as his peers and having his work published with his classmates' work (participating and contributing). He began to work alongside his peers in daily writing with an increasing amount of curiosity and determination to complete sentences (using language symbols and texts). Peter's incredibly powerful statement "I am a writer" reflects his sense of identity as being a part of a learning community. Within the home, Peter's writing attempts are accepted as a valid part of his recreational activities.

How might these stories strengthen Peter's identity as a learner?

Peter has been able to read some basic sight words for a number of years, but has struggled with the transition to writing them. During the 14-month period, he was able to become more independent, requiring less teacher support to complete a sentence (agency). Over time, Peter has developed confidence in his ability to complete a sentence independently and to generalise his use of such sentences in a variety of contexts, such as home and school (breadth). This learning has been supported by Peter's family, who have provided him with practise of new words and phrases and have endorsed his use of text in a wide range of activities at home (depth).

For more information on the four dimensions of agency, breadth, continuity, and depth (ABCDs), refer to *Narrative assessment: a guide for teachers*.

Learning areas

Level 1 English

This learning is mainly situated in literacy. Peter is developing his understanding of language features. He is recognising some basic sight words and is recognising the word order required for them to convey his message in text. This is a huge step forward in learning as, in the past, the generalisation of reading skills to writing has been problematic for Peter. Throughout the string, Peter is able to show an understanding of shaping text for different audiences and purposes. Within school, he is able to use pictures to support new learning. At home, he is able to produce text to give a choice (menu) or to state instructions (bathroom door). In both settings his writing clearly conveys his personal voice. Over time, Peter is able to use an increasing range of vocabulary to communicate

precise meaning. Examples from home provide us with guidelines for supporting him in future learning as he attempts words that he can speak, but not yet write clearly.

Effective pedagogy

What does this tell us about teaching and learning in this setting?

Both home and school are safe learning environments where Peter is confident in taking risks with text (creating a supportive learning environment). At first, we supported his new learning through teaching and modelling sentences, which used only the words with which he was already familiar (making connections to prior learning). We then began providing daily practise with words and visuals to make new sentences and then introduced a computer program, which provides visuals with text and a focus on writing that is relevant to his experiences, (providing sufficient opportunities to learn). His classroom teacher further supported this learning by placing sight words and simple sight-word phrases around the classroom so Peter could practise his new skills. This learning has been supported by Peter's family, who have provided him with practise of new words and phrases and have endorsed his use of text in a wide range of activities at home.

Reflective question for the reader

"What is the best way to show the student that we value their learning?"

Useful resources

Downing, J. E. (c1996). *Including students with severe and multiple disabilities in typical classrooms: practical strategies for teachers*. Baltimore: P.H. Brookes Pub.

Janney, R., & Snell, M. E. (c2004). *Modifying schoolwork* (2nd ed.). Baltimore: P.H. Brookes Pub.

Ministry of Education. (2003). *Effective literacy practice in years 1 to 4*. Wellington: Learning Media.

Ministry of Education. (2007). *Literacy learning progressions: meeting the reading and writing demands of the curriculum: a professional tool for teachers: draft for consultation*. Wellington: Learning Media.

Mitchell, D. (2008). *What really works in special and inclusive education: using evidence-based teaching strategies*. Abingdon [England]: Routledge.