

FOUNDATION FOR EDUCATIONAL SERVICES (FES)

Writing Together – A Family Experience!

There are times when writers are bombarded with such a number of writing tasks that writing may be viewed as something to get over with quickly. But what if there was a way to make writing alive, an experience to be shared, something to be treasured? Well, this is what teachers trained in the writing process soon discover and apply across the curriculum in various schools.

The Malta Writing Programme (MWP) within the Foundation for Educational Services (FES) focuses on promoting the writing process - an innovative and interactive approach to the teaching of writing. Backed by on going teachers' reflective practice and action research, it propagates the reading-writing connection, the use of different writing strategies and the application of formative and summative assessment, all of which are crucial aspects highlighted in the National Curriculum.

All stakeholders in the students learning life are catered for within the educational programmes run by the Foundation, and this applies also to the MWP. The MWP organises different opportunities where parents are invited to learn about the methodology and apply it with their children at home.

Family Writing Clubs



The MWP regularly organises Family Writing Clubs (FWC). Parents enrol in a Parents' Writing Club so as to learn how to help their children develop their writing skills. At the same time, they themselves engage in group-based creative writing exercises that stimulate the writer within to emerge. Parents participate in parallel learning opportunities and experience the same writing process activities as their children. Both groups of children and adults are facilitated by fully qualified tutors specialised in the Writing Process Methodology taught by the Foundation. Participants, children and adults alike,

are guided through the whole creative writing process through new and hands-on activities.

Children are likewise encouraged to extend and develop their creative writing skills in both Maltese and English through the use of pre-writing, drafting, revising, editing and publishing skills. They are encouraged to share their writing, give feedback to each other and publish their work, both orally and visually by displaying their finished product in their portfolio and on the boards. Since publishing is an integral part of the writing process, the last session is a collective celebration of completed writings developed during the Club sessions. Parents, siblings, grandparents and class teachers are invited to witness and be part of this writing celebration.

Writing Clubs run for 10 weeks; they are normally held on Saturday mornings at the National Curriculum Centre (NCC) in Hamrun. Hosting the Clubs at the NCC is a move away from the often rigid layout of the classroom to a more relaxed environment, open and conducive to pair

and group work. Certificates are given to all participants who successfully complete the Writing Club programme.

The club is open to children aged 8 to 13 years attending state and non-state schools. Children who are interested in attending a Writing Club should be fluent readers and writers in Maltese and English, love to write and want to experiment with writing to create their own stories, plays, poems or books.



The Student Step



During 2007 a follow up club was launched; participants who attended past family writing clubs could apply. Parents worked alongside their children exploring various genres and experimenting with myths, dialogues, narrative poetry, writing adverts and newspaper articles. Participants were given the opportunity to work on their own, write as a parent and child team as well as in collaborative group work. Combining their efforts and input to create a final group writing was exhilarating and sparked further writing ideas.

Family Writing Weekends

Family Writing Weekends (FWW) are open to the general public, for families who have never attended a Family Writing Club. These weekends offer parents and their children a taste of the writing process experience; an opportunity to get infected with the writing bug! During a FWW, adults and children come together to write as a family. Parents and children work creatively on the same topic, reading and sharing their work whilst also helping each other edit their writing. These workshops have proven to be great learning and fun experiences for the whole family.

Families are introduced to the Writing Process through different workshops focusing on developing a theme, character or a definite aspect of the writing process. The workshops are infused with drama, music, arts and crafts so that families are free to create a piece of writing through the use of the expressive arts.

FWW are usually held twice yearly during the first and third scholastic terms. The last FWW held in June 2006 was a resounding success even though families had to choose to attend either on Friday or Saturday due to the overwhelming number of applicants.

Teachers' Family Writing Weekend



2007 also saw the launch of another initiative by the MWP – a writing weekend aimed at teachers and their offspring. It was run along the lines of other family writing weekends and it provided teachers who taught different levels to experience different forms of writing in an enjoyable atmosphere together with their own children. Participants voluntarily shared their writings with the group thus consolidating the enjoyable experience and the pride they felt in their own writings.



Contact Information

The MWP is currently in the process of organising the November Family Writing Clubs. More information on the November FWC or on future events can be obtained by telephoning the MWP secretary, Ms Muriel Grech, on: 2145 5600 / 2145 5653 / 2145 5607 ext. 115, emailing on: mwp.fes@gov.mt or by accessing the website of the Foundation for Educational Services (FES): www.fes.org.mt and clicking onto the MWP icon.

Jane Farrugia Buhagiar & Rachel Schembri