



Action Research and Data

Seven Steps to Writing Success

Project overview

The Seven Steps to Writing Success has proven results in a range of state, catholic and independent schools throughout Australia. Over 5000 teachers a year undertake training in the program.

Data collection

To collect hard data, most schools gather pre and post writing samples from each student. Students could be given a choice of three topics. E.g.

Narrative

- Magic and mischief
- The wave
- Gold.

Persuasive

- Spiders versus snakes – which are more dangerous?
- Ghosts really do exist
- Persuade your parents to give you a rise in pocket money.

Students should write on the same topic for their pre and post writing samples.

Planning time of 10-15 minutes should be given in both test scenarios.

Note: Grade 3 and 5 students will be given a different prompt from the Grade 7 and 9 students in 2015, so vary topics accordingly.



Marking of samples

The NAPLAN marking rubric is an excellent guide as it values the high level 'authorial' techniques of writing. You can find the marking guide on the NAP website:

The marking of all writing samples should be moderated.

What to look for in the data

- Punctuation and spelling are not explicitly taught in the Seven Steps and these should be ignored in the data when assessing the success of the Seven Steps program. A parallel resource to teach the 'secretarial' side of writing should be used.
- Expect to see improvements in the other 8 NAPLAN areas.
- The planning techniques of cohesion and structure should improve due to the strong emphasis of the Seven Steps on planning (Step 1). Ideas should also be more original and plentiful due to the brainstorming technique (Step 1).
- Paragraphing, though not explicitly taught will improve in the later grades as this is a by-product of planning. New paragraph = new idea.
- Engaging the Audience has proved to rapidly improve due to Step 2: Sizzling Starts. Show, don't Tell (Step 5) has also a strong flow on effect in this section too.
- Vocabulary and sentence structure should improve due to the Brainstorm first, Write second technique. Often poor vocabulary is a product of students trying to think of what to write next and how to say it and how to spell – all bundled into the same brain space.



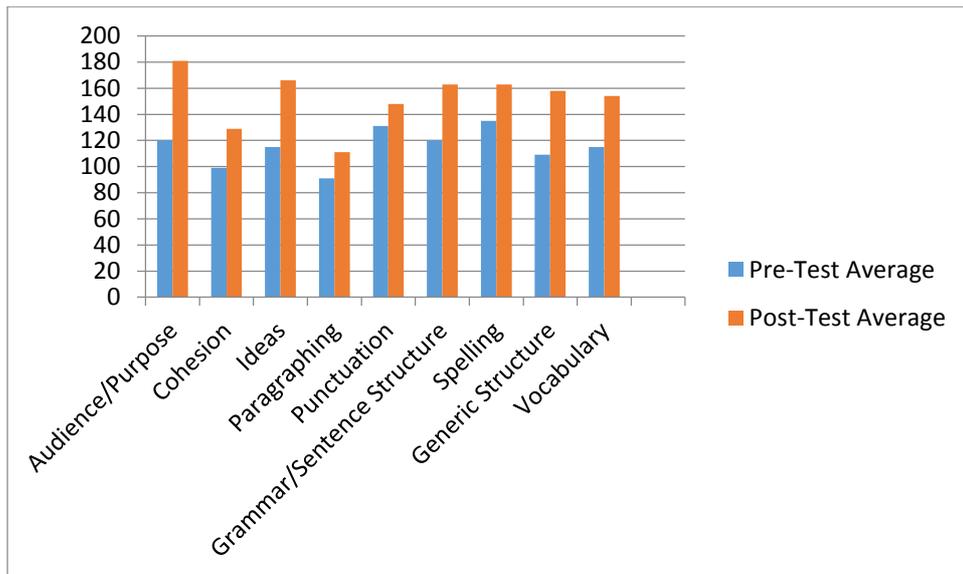
Case Study – Goondiwindi SS

This was a 2014 project implemented by Susan Evans – Regional Project Officer and Robyn Pearcey, Pedagogy Coach, now Master Teacher.

Here is a sample of pre and post data from Goondiwindi SS in the Darling Downs region.

The Darling Downs project ran for ten weeks.

	Pre-Test Average	Post-Test Average
Audience/Purpose	120	181
Cohesion	99	129
Ideas	115	166
Paragraphing	91	111
Punctuation	131	148
Grammar/Sentence Structure	120	163
Spelling	135	163
Generic Structure	109	158
Vocabulary	115	154





Student engagement

It would also be beneficial to conduct pre and post survey on student engagement in writing. Some questions might include:

On a score of one to ten:

- How much do you enjoy writing?
- How confident do you feel in writing?
- How would you rate yourself as a writer?



Some Results

'Two of our teachers attended your Seven Steps seminar last year. They used the program in the Grade 3 cohort. Our NAPLAN results in those two grades were outstanding.' **(Aspley SS, Qld)**

'After our whole staff did the workshops, our writing across P-6, went through the roof!' **(Margie Murnane, Surf Coast schools, Vic.)**

'Congratulations! Seven Steps to Writing has had a huge impact on learning and teaching at our school. The top Victorian Catholic Primary School in NAPLAN 2012!' **(Claire O'Dea, St James, Gardenvale)**

'Seven Steps showed in the NAPLAN writing enormously, especially the Sizzling Starts. Our NAPLAN results have improved dramatically from the year before. The boys love the Seven Steps in the classroom.' **(Kathryn Barry, Deputy Head – Curriculum, The Southport Preparatory School (TSS))**

'WOW! I have been teaching for over 20 years and have not come across such a simple, yet authentic writing program. Linking oral and written is such a great method to assist reluctant writers.' **(Irene Williams, Warrill View SS.)**

'Brilliant. It makes sense, it's easy, it's NOT extra. It gets results.' **(Julie O'Brien, Minimbah SS Qld.)**

'I have been using the Seven Steps in my class this year and have seen how it engages and excites even the most reluctant writers!' **(Pip Walsh, Upper Coomera State College.)**

'Since Jen's visit last year our teachers have continued to embrace the Seven Steps Writing Program with astounding results.' **(Helen Freeman, Principal, Gray St PS, Hamilton)**

'In the 2012 NAPLAN writing task, all classes involved in the program significantly outscored those not involved. Our data has certainly shown how quickly the program can turn our students into competent, motivated writers.' **(Robyn Brown, Minimbah)**