

WEBSITE RESOURCE W11.1

Claire's writing reflections and transcript

Claire: On my writing river the first thing I've got is when I was younger I always loved the thought of being a teacher so when I'd go home, I'd write out my own little registers and pretend to take my class and I had a whiteboard so I'd write on my whiteboard and pretend to be teaching lessons and doing the lessons that I'd done that day. Then I can remember a handwriting lesson from year 4 when the teacher was demonstrating on the board and said that when joining letters such as 'a' and 'h', like, the join between the two you had to fit a bird's beak in between them. Yeah, it's strange. The next thing I was always quite proud to have neat handwriting for a left handed person. Just because like, other left handed people quite often hold their pen different ways and I'd just picked up a way of doing it as a right handed person, just in my left hand. I used to pass notes to my brother who was downstairs in our bay window and I was upstairs. So we'd open the windows and put on a paper clip and a bit of thread and just dangle it down to each other. And then when I was in year 6 I had to rewrite a whole spelling test because I'd put circles above my 'ls' instead of dots. And apparently we weren't allowed to write like that in school. And then when I was 16 I sat my English language GCSE early and gained an 'A'. I felt quite proud of that because I'd always struggled gaining the higher levels even though I really enjoyed English. But we had to write a story based on Christmas shopping and I was always told to think outside the box so I tried my best and I sort of wrote it and envisaged it as people walking into shops that were bodies and pulling out all their organs and the shops having feelings and these people coming in . . . so . . .

Interviewer: Most of that is very positive, isn't it? Have you always had positive feelings about writing?

Claire: Yeah I've always really enjoyed English. Like I love writing, I love English. Maths, put numbers in front of me it automatically goes negative like, English has always been my favourite subject and it's always been the one that I've got highest grades in as well.

Interviewer: When you think about your own experience now, what implications might that have for how you would tackle writing in the classroom? Does it give you any insights into things that you might do in the classroom with children?

Claire: Erm, I'd sort of let them express their hand writing a little bit more in their own way, like I'd never say you have to write like this . . . but just make it fun because I know quite a few people that have negative responses to English just because they've had a negative past erm or they've not enjoyed it so I've always thought of making writing fun and more relevant to the children as well instead of just sitting down and making them write a piece of writing just because I want them to, so . . . I think if they understand why they're doing it and they're enjoying it, I can't see why it would have a negative effect on them.

Interviewer: Can you think of a time on placement where you've been really pleased with work you've done with writing with a group of children?

Claire: Erm, yeah, it was more of a science focused one but it was getting children to write their own sentence about a trip that we'd been on and about butterflies and why they liked the trip.

Interviewer: How old were the children?

Claire: They were four and five so it was FS2. And I was working with the low ability group and one of the girls still hadn't quite figured out which hand she preferred and we could tell it was left but she kept swapping, but they all exceeded my expectations on their handwriting and what they could write in a sentence as well. Especially this girl. Once you'd guided her more to her left hand she really did . . . she'd quite often try and get out of handwriting, but she really did sit down and write. And recently I've worked with an EAL child who the teachers have basically been like 'Well, just get out of him what you can get out of him . . .' and we were doing comprehension so they were answering questions based on what they'd read in a book. And it came to writing 'one pound' and he'd wanted to write a symbol and just '1' but I was like 'No, I'm going to get him to write the words.' And I could tell that all it took was like patience and showing he had to write his because he could write and he could spell and he could form the letters but every time he wrote one letter he'd look around and just stop and wait for me to go 'Oh it's all right then you can go now.' But I just persisted with him and made him sit there and write it and he did; he wrote more than I'd expected him to write because of the responses I'd heard from the teachers and I was really surprised. I know now for when I'm working with him later on, it's just persistence. It's the fact that he's trying to avoid writing, not because he can't write.