

ÉCRI:

A Writing Model Incorporating Best Practices in French Immersion



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CONTEXT

- New Brunswick/Nouveau-Brunswick
- Province of Canada
- Population: 729 498
- Officially bilingual: English and French
- Education - Provincial Responsibility
- 2 parallel education systems: English and French



CONTEXT (cont'd)

- K-12, 5 to 17 yrs old
- 13 years of schooling - three divisions: elementary (K-5), middle school (6-8), and high school (9-12)
- 2 programs offered in Anglophone sector:
 1. Regular program: Instruction in English
 2. French Immersion program: 70% of daily instruction in French and 30% in the other official language, English



CONTEXT: School

- Urban middle school (Grade 6-8, ages 11-13)
- Concerned about its students' performance on provincial literacy assessment
- Established a school goal to improve students' writing skills.
- Aware of **ÉCRI** writing model developed for and tested at the elementary level and interested in experimenting with the model in both French and English LA classes.
- Partnership formed with University of New Brunswick (UNB) researchers and school.



PURPOSE OF THE PRESENTATION

To describe the second phase of an action-research project focused on best practices in writing at the middle school level:

- To explain the ÉCRI writing model with reference to theoretical constructs, practitioner knowledge, and empirical evidence from classroom experiments.
- To present and to discuss findings



THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

Best Practice

- Definition :

*Serious, thoughtful, informed,
responsible, state-of-the-art teaching*

(Zemelman et al., 2005, p.vi):



THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

Best Practices in Writing

- Process approach most efficient (Cumming, 2001)
- Daily writing practice for extended periods of time (Hall, 1993)
- Predictability and consistency in instruction (Calkins, 1983)
- Explicit instruction, scaffoldings, and modeling (Peregoy and Boyle, 2005)
- Reading-writing connections (Cumming, 2001 and Grabe, 2001)



THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

Second Language Learners

- Writing processes similar in both first language (L1) and second language (L2), but certain modifications and different expectations needed (Peregoy and Boyle, 2005):



Characteristics of L2 learners' texts when compared to L1's texts

- Shorter texts
- More simplistic sentence structures
- Reduced vocabulary
- More mistakes
- Take longer to compose
- Have access to limited strategies and linguistic competence
(Cornaire and Raymond, 1994)
- Need three times more time to plan (Hall, 1993)



THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

Professional Learning Communities

- Teacher collaboration in order to ensure and improve student's learning (Schmoker, 2005)
- Teachers meet to analyze learning and teaching processes in order to improve professional practices (Harris and Muijs, 2005)
- Common vision and shared knowledge (Fullan, 2005)



THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The **ÉCRI** model



METHOD

Participants

- Urban Middle School
- 682 students
- 60% in immersion program and 40% regular program
- 5 French Language Arts (LA) teachers, 2 English LA teachers, 1 Literacy specialist and 1 member of the school administration
- 10 classes: 4 French immersion LA course only, 6 others in both French and English LA courses



METHOD

Research Questions

In order to help the school to achieve its school-wide goal of improving writing the UNB research team and the school decided to explore the following questions:

1. Can the ÉCRI model designed for use at the elementary school be implemented effectively at the middle school level?
2. If so, what modifications, if any, are needed?
3. What is the role of a PLC in implementing the **ÉCRI** writing model successfully at the middle school level?



METHOD

Methodological Orientation

- Action research:
 - Cooperative inquiry (Heron and Reason, 2006)
 - Democratic dialogue (Gustavsen, 2006)

This methodology encourages two-way communication, the participation of each member of the team, a balance between reflection and action and work experience as a starting point for dialogue.



METHOD

■ **Two stages:**

1. **Regular meetings of French Immersion PLC and UNB research team** (once per month for ??? How long?)

✓ Purpose: to respond to the teachers' needs of continuing professional development and to answer research questions

2. **Classroom observation and filming**

how often? How long?

✓ French Immersion students in French Language Arts (4 classes)

✓ French Immersion students in English Language Arts (1 class)

✓ French Immersion struggling writers (1 intervention class, 10 students, co-teaching : 1 LA teacher + 1 Literacy support specialist)



RESULTS AND ANALYSES

- Teachers felt the need for a common instructional writing model (eg. Zemelman et al., 2005; Pressley et al., 2007).
- Increased professional discussions, even in informal contexts (eg. Staff room) and teachers' collaboration (eg. Several teachers brainstorming about modeling, sharing and graphic organizers; common planning of units); shared terminology



RESULTS AND ANALYSES

(cont'd)

- Members of the French Immersion PLC reported to the school general PLC and served as a guiding coalition who helped build consensus and who lead change (DuFour et al., 2006); Relational Leadership (Donaldson, 2007).
- Built interest and momentum; discussions about writing now occurring on daily basis.
- All school LA teachers (French and English) + 1 music teacher expressed an interest in implementing the model; researchers and the school administration agreed to offer training to all remaining LA teachers.



RESULTS AND ANALYSES

(cont'd)

- Teachers felt need for more scaffolding in their instruction and more explicit instruction (Peregoy and Boyle, 2005).
- **ÉCRI** model provided necessary scaffolding and allowed for explicit instruction.



RESULTS AND ANALYSES

(cont'd)

- Teachers' perceptions:
 - ✓ Students more successful and autonomous.
 - ✓ Particularly successful with helping all students improve text structure.
 - ✓ Support struggling writers. No student falls through the cracks.
 - ✓ Push further advanced writers. Can notice differences in texts.



RESULTS AND ANALYSES

(cont'd)

- ✓ Four first phases of the model provides the necessary planning time for L2 writers and for struggling writers.
- ✓ Modelled writing phase where students compare texts, provide them not only with models of genre structure, but also the vocabulary and the sentence structures needed.
- ✓ Shared and interactive writing phases reinforce these elements.



RESULTS AND ANALYSES

(cont'd)

- ✓ Four first phases of the model as well as the complementary activities allow students to gradually decrease their reliance on scaffolding and, consequently to gradually increase autonomy until they are ready to write independently in the fifth phase.
- ✓ Increases students' confidence and, also, teachers' confidence. *Need quote to support*
- ✓ Individualizes instruction, especially in regards to linguistic conventions instruction which one of teachers' concerns, and allows teachers to respond to their learners' needs.



RESULTS AND ANALYSES

(cont'd)

- We need a quote for each
- Some teachers expressed concern about the need for flexibility with respect to the apparent linear nature of the model (especially for Phases 3 and 4).
- Teachers discovered that, at their students' level, Phase 3, Shared Writing and Phase 4, Interactive Writing, worked better if combined.
- During the Phase 3, Shared Writing, the middle school LA teachers felt that it was important to give students a greater participation in the process.



CONCLUSION

- Teachers reported that the **ÉCRI** model was useful and efficient at the middle school level.
- Further analyses:
 - ✓ Data collected in the form of students' texts written prior to and after using the model will be analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively.
 - ✓ Visual data collected during filming will be analyzed qualitatively, especially for the struggling writers group.



Further Analyses