

AUTEN, Anne. 1983. ERIC/RCS report : Help for reluctant writers, Language arts, vol 60, no 7, October 1983, pp 921-926.

Research suggests that children who are apprehensive about their ability are often reluctant to write. Avoidance of writing tasks leads to insufficient development of writing skills, poor performance, and the reinforcement of apprehension.

The work of apprehensive writers differs significantly in structure, language use, and amounts of information conveyed from work of writers with more confidence. If an improvement in skill is to be achieved, a reduction of fear of writing must occur.

Suggestions on ways in which to achieve this include:

- (1) Set free writing exercises on topics of enough interest that they distract reluctant writers from self-consciousness. Encourage students to write rapidly whatever comes to mind without worrying about spelling, mechanics or awkwardness. Encourage experimentation. Do not award marks - free writing is a process, not a final product; though volunteers might read their writing aloud for the response of others.
- (2) Ask pupils to write journal entries, one of which will be chosen to turn into a finished paper.

- (3) Ask members of the class to take turns in writing a daily log in which both serious and humorous events that take place in the class are recorded.
- (4) Use a word processor if available - students with writer's block find the screen terminal and its erasing capabilities often stimulate a flow of words that paper inhibits. Other research, however, warns of students' fear of machines and other disadvantages in the use of the word processor.

Teachers interested in learning more about strategies to encourage reluctant writers should look to the ERIC database as a prime resource. Some references are also provided in the article from which this summary is drawn.

SUE COHEN

Thomas Pringle Award

Each year the English Academy makes the Thomas Pringle Award in various categories for work published in newspapers and journals. In 1985 the category of articles on language and the teaching of English is to be considered. This will cover work published during 1983 and 1984.

The editors of Lengwitch have been invited to submit copies of the journal to the adjudicators' panel for articles on language and the teaching of English.