



# Teaching Children to Write

Three Crazy Hats  
and  
a Very Special Cat

The Feet First Picture Book Award

# Picture Book Competition

Competition starts  
1 August

Last day for entries  
18 November

Entry details at  
[www.feetfirst.govt.nz](http://www.feetfirst.govt.nz)

# Have your own picture book published



Enter the Feet First safer journeys for children picture book competition. The winning book (written and drawn by your students) will be professionally published.

To access the free teaching/learning resource and entry details, please visit: [www.feetfirst.govt.nz](http://www.feetfirst.govt.nz)

# Workshop

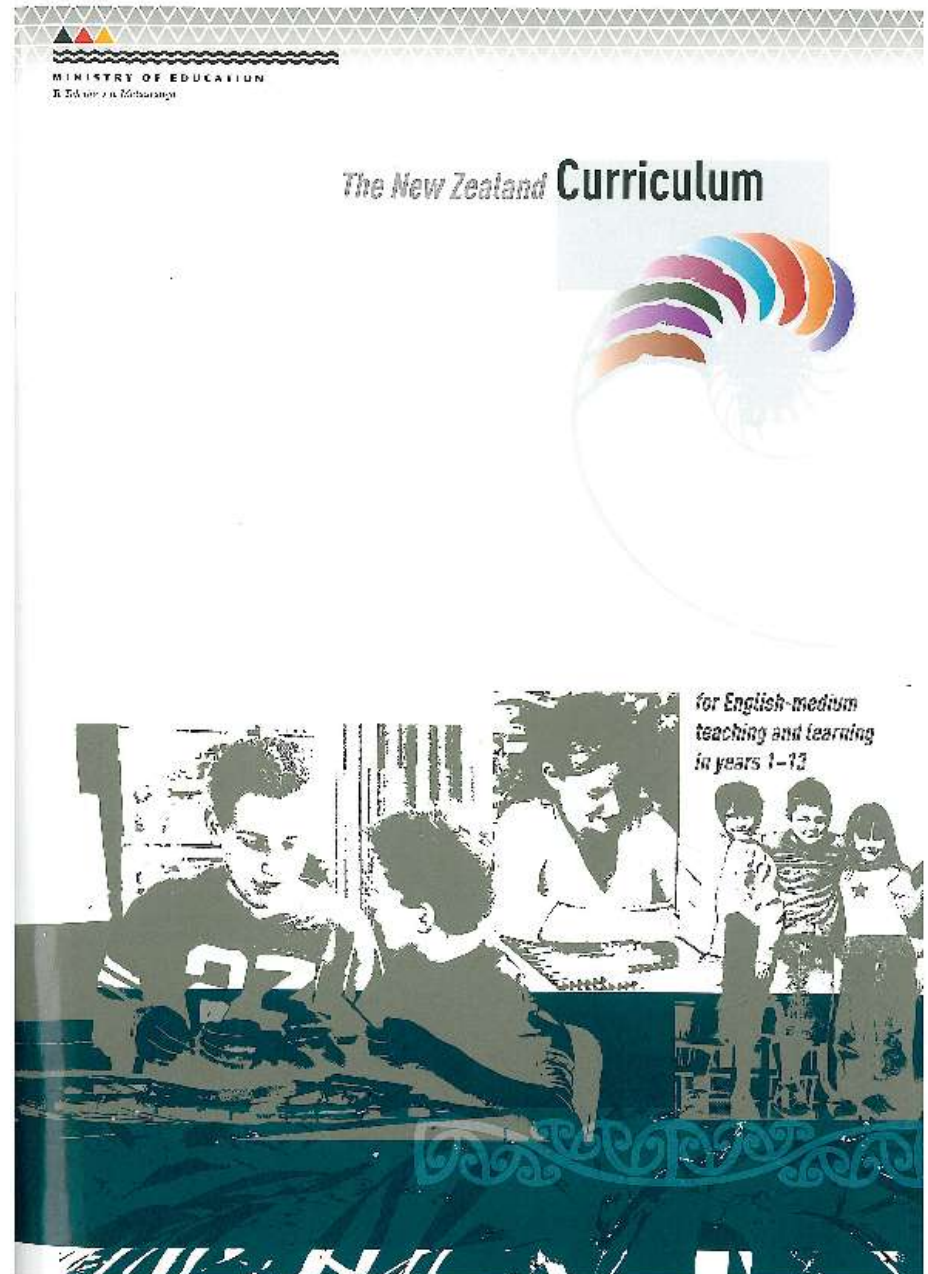
- Curriculum links
- Creating a mock-up
- Identifying picture book elements
- Exploring illustration styles
- Writing the text
- Doing thumbnails
- Creating sketches
- Final art
- Getting feedback
- Winners' tips
- Follow-ups ➤



# Curriculum links

“Using a set of underpinning processes and strategies, students develop knowledge, skills, and understandings related to:

- text purposes and audiences;
- ideas within language contexts;
- language features that enhance texts;
- the structure and organisation of texts.” ➤



“Students need to practice making meaning and creating meaning at each level of the curriculum.” ➤



Kō te reo te māhiri  
Kō te reo tōka ahuru!  
Kō te reo te ora.

### What is English about?

English is the study, use, and enjoyment of the English language and its literatures, communicated orally, visually, and in writing, for a range of purposes and audiences and in a variety of text forms. Learning English encompasses learning the language, learning through the language, and learning about the language.

Understanding, using, and creating oral, written, and visual texts of increasing complexity is at the heart of English teaching and learning. By engaging with text-based activities, students become increasingly skilled and sophisticated speakers and listeners, writers and readers, presenters and viewers.

### Why study English?

Literacy in English gives students access to the understanding, knowledge, and skills they need to participate fully in the social, cultural, political, and economic life of New Zealand and the wider world. To be successful participants, they need to be effective oral, written, and visual communicators who are able to think critically and in depth.

By understanding how language works, students are equipped to make appropriate language choices and apply them in a range of contexts. Students learn to deconstruct and critically interrogate texts in order to understand the power of language to enrich and shape their own and others' lives.

Students appreciate and enjoy texts in all their forms. The study of New Zealand and world literature contributes to students' developing sense of identity, their awareness of New Zealand's bicultural heritage, and their understanding of the world.

Success in English is fundamental to success across the curriculum. All learning areas with the possible exception of languages require students to receive, process, and present ideas or information using the English language as a medium. English can be studied both as a heritage language and as an additional language.

English presents students with opportunities to engage with and develop the key competencies in diverse contexts.

### How is the learning area structured?

English is structured around two interconnected strands, each encompassing the oral, written, and visual forms of the language. The strands differentiate between the modes in which students are primarily:

- making meaning of ideas or information they receive (Listening, Reading, and Viewing);
- creating meaning for themselves or others (Speaking, Writing, and Presenting).

The achievement objectives within each strand suggest progressions through which most students move as they become more of a skilled oral, written, and visual communicator. Using a set of underpinning processes and strategies, students develop knowledge, skills, and understandings related to:

- text purposes and audiences;
- ideas within language contexts;
- language features that enhance texts;
- the structure and organisation of texts.

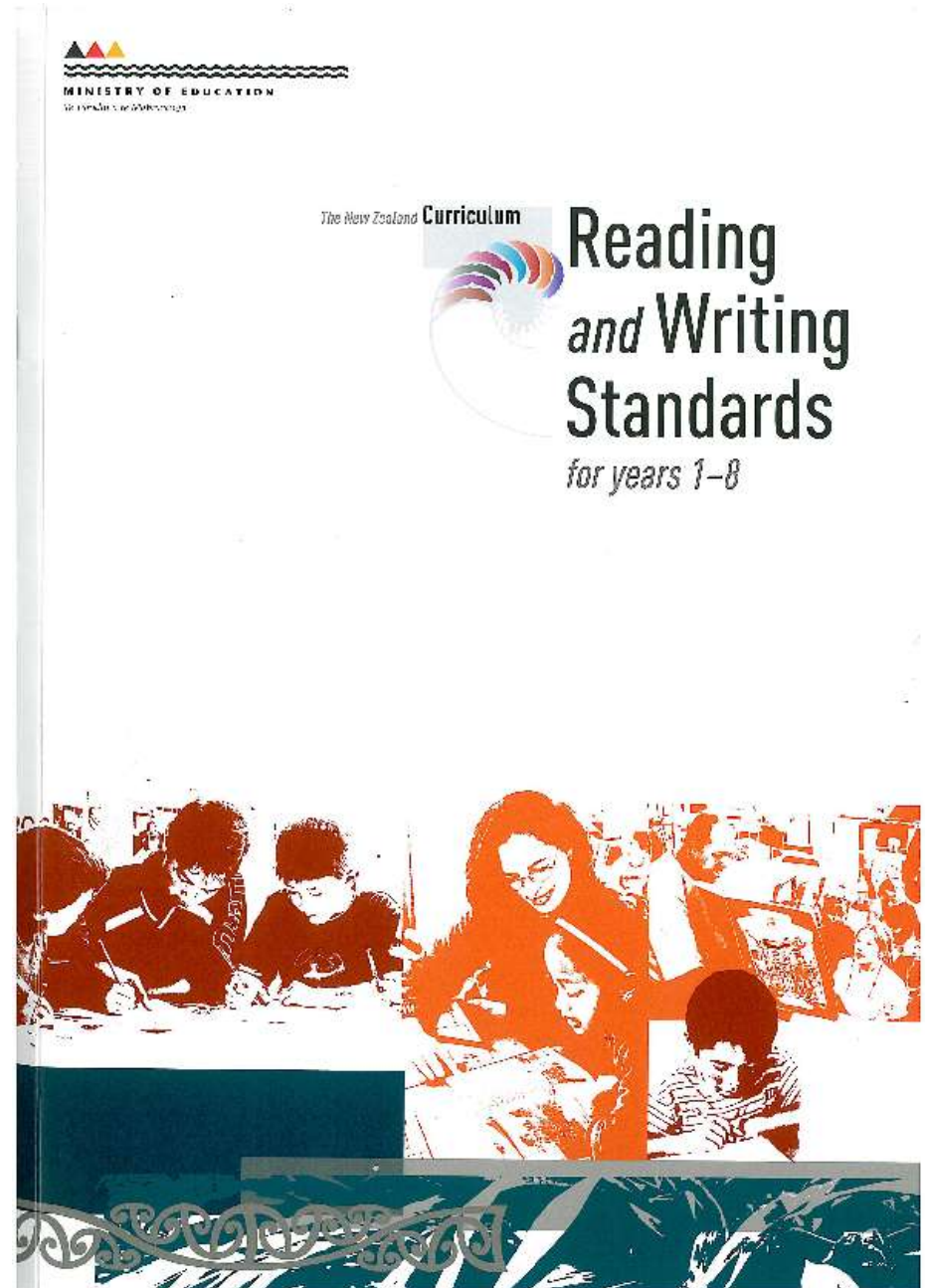
Students need to practise *making meaning* and *creating meaning* at each level of the curriculum. This need is reflected in the way that the achievement objectives are structured. As they progress, students use their skills to engage with tasks and texts that are increasingly sophisticated and challenging, and they do this in increasing depth.



## Writing to meet the demands of curriculum tasks in years 1-8

- “The aim of writing instruction is to build students’ accuracy, their fluency, and their ability to create meaningful text.
- For information about the instructional strategies ... refer to chapter 4 of the Effective Literacy Practice handbooks.” ➤

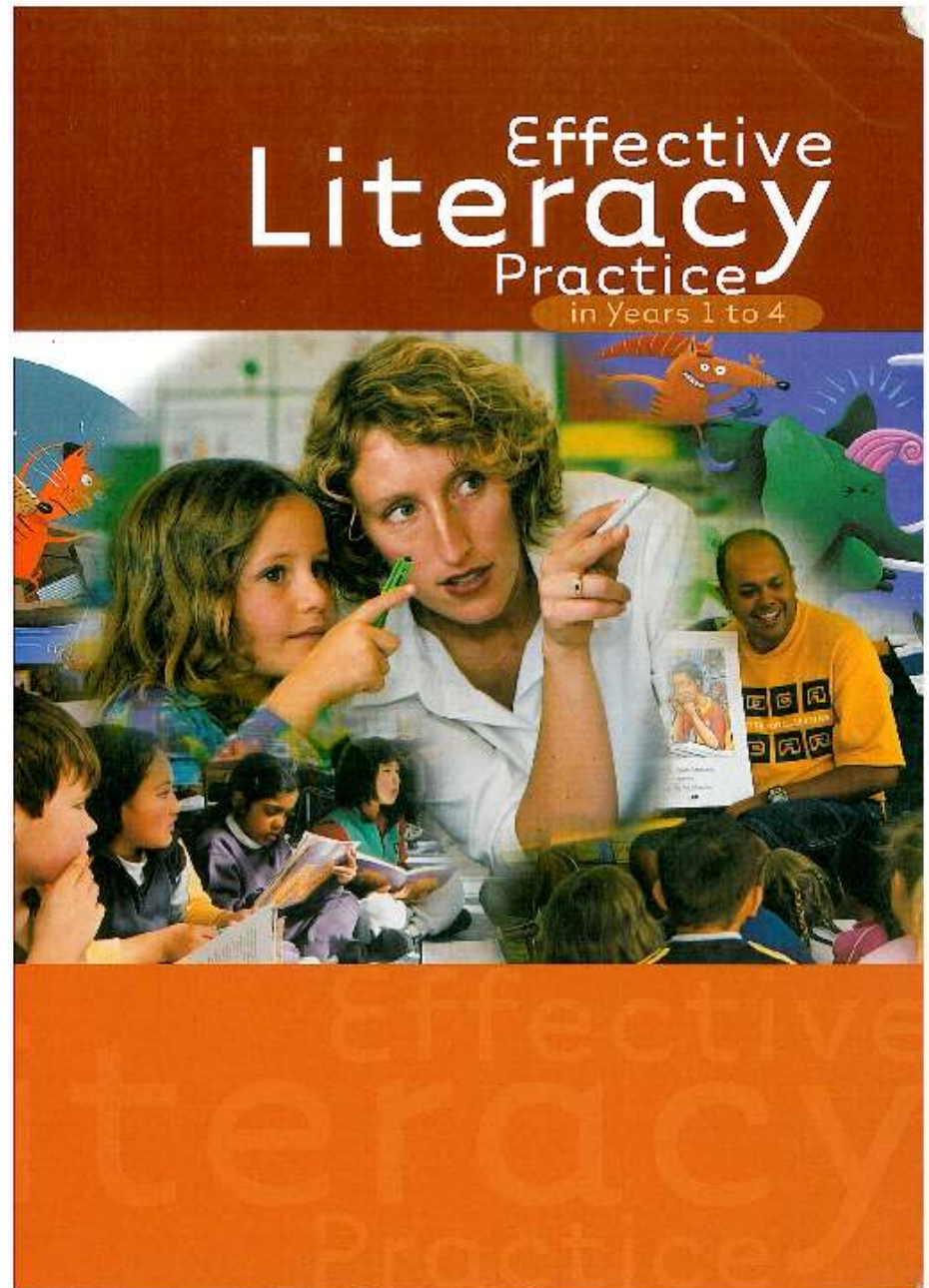
*Reading and Writing Standards  
for years 1-8*



## Shared writing

“Shared writing involves the teacher and a group of students – often the whole class – in planning and constructing a text together. The teacher models and talks through the process of constructing a text, giving explicit instruction in how to use writing strategies during the shared writing process. The students contribute their ideas and expertise to the process of constructing the text.” ➤

*Effective Literacy Practice  
in Years 1 to 4*



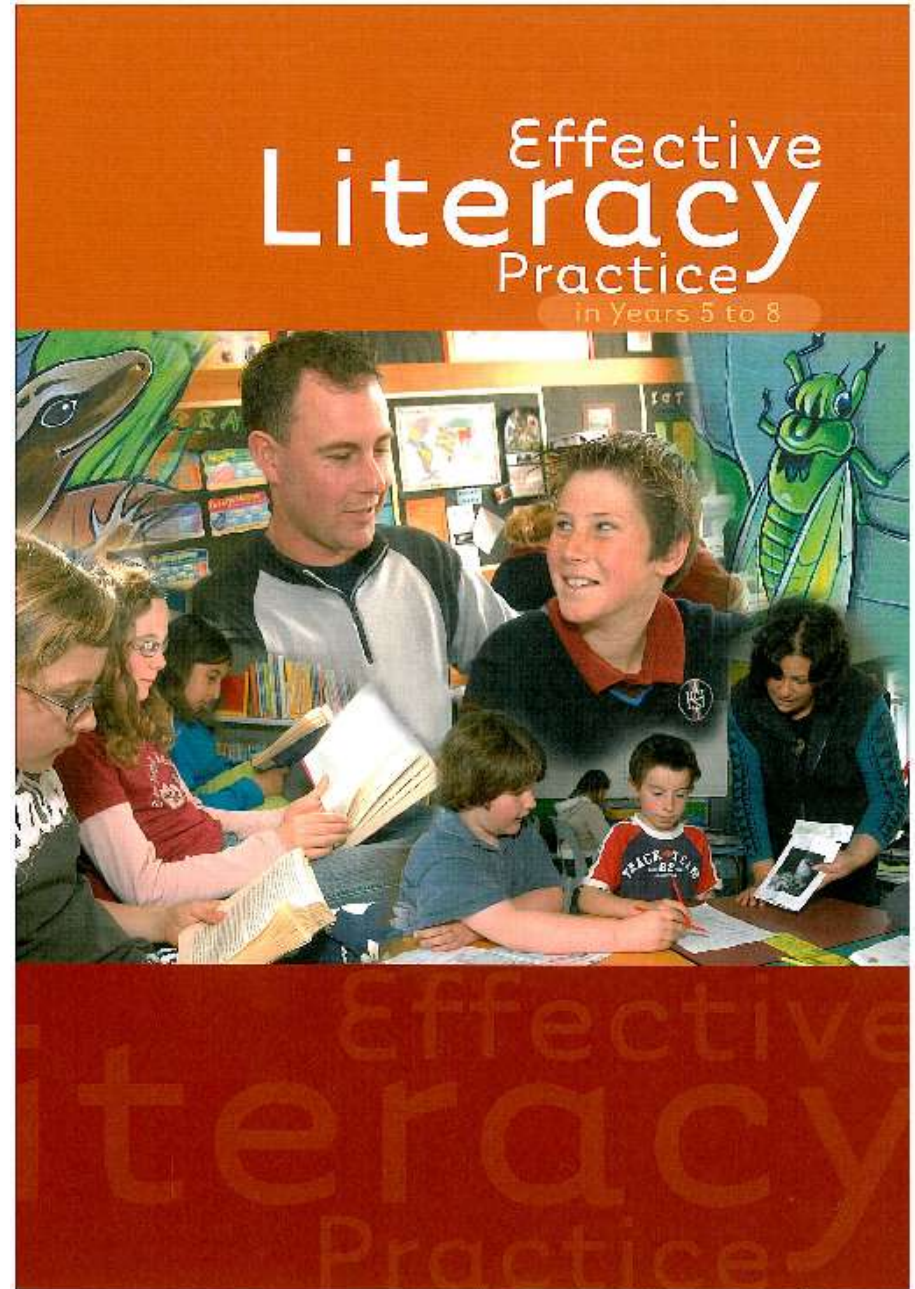
## Shared writing

“In every shared writing session, the students have a specific purpose for writing and also a learning goal.

During a shared writing session, the teacher acts as a scribe, writing on a chart or board that all the students can see easily. Generally, the students contribute most of the text, often in response to the teacher’s questions and prompts

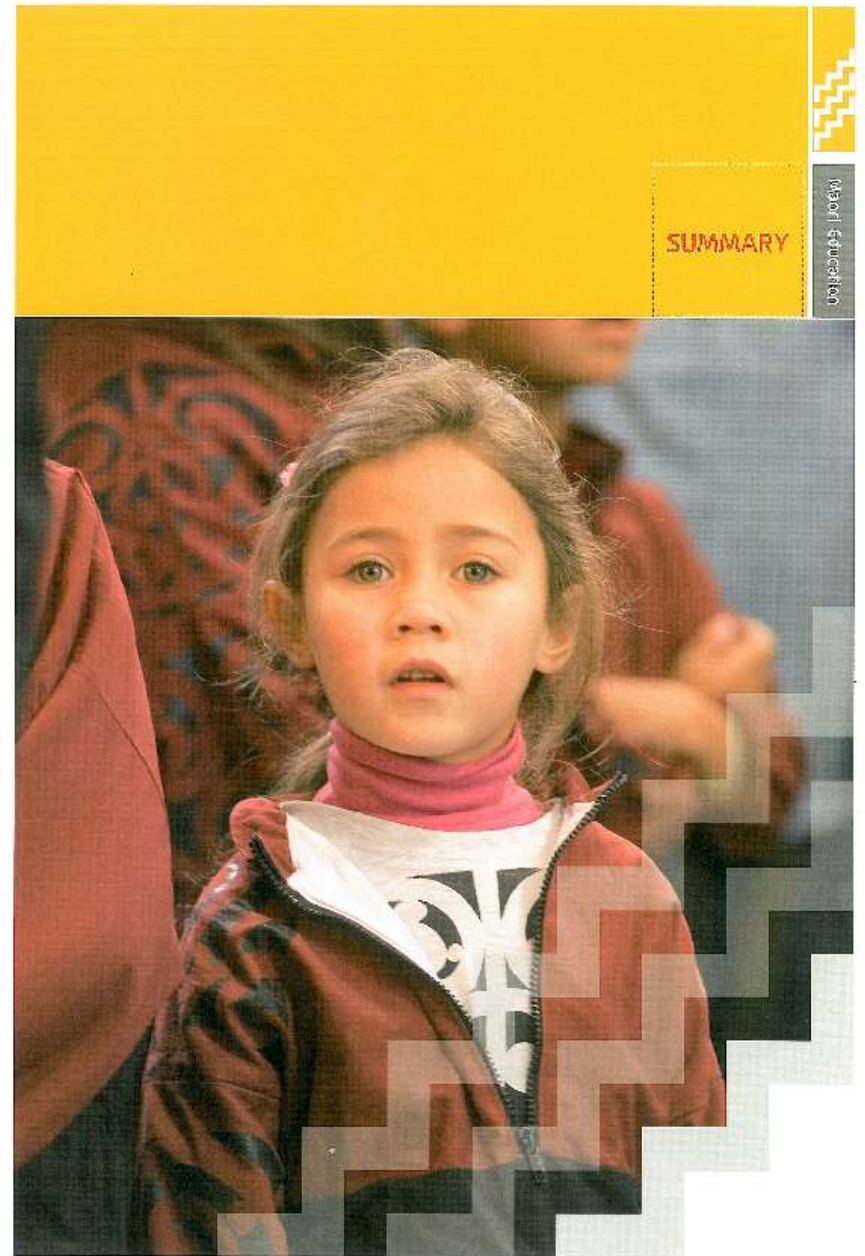
As the text is recorded, it is constantly reread and amended.” ➤

*Effective Literacy Practice  
in Years 5 to 8*



# Strong early literacy and numeracy foundations

*Ka Hikitia: Managing for Success*





# Sort out your resources and your plan

## Resources

You will need:

- cardboard, paper, scissors, pencils and erasers for making and modifying thumbnails, storyboards and mock-ups
- a ready to read book
- a selection of picture books
- art material for creating illustrations
- tissue paper to separate original artwork
- a computer (optional)
- a selection of interesting photos cut out from magazines and taken from a variety of angles, including wide shots and close ups
- a camera (optional).

create a mock-up

identify picture  
book elements

explore  
illustration styles

write the text

draw up  
thumbnails

create full size  
pencil sketches

get feedback

final art

## **Workshop tip**

Create a picture-book-saturated learning space. ➤

# Create a mock-up

## Your class will create a mock-up

16-page picture book with a cover (measuring 260 mm down and 210 mm across)

Students can cut out a piece of light cardboard measuring 260 mm long and 420 mm wide. Help them measure this accurately.

Fold it in half (so that it measures 260 mm long and 210 mm wide).

Repeat with four big pieces of paper.

Put the folded pieces of paper inside the folded piece of cardboard. Tell them that they've just made a mock-up of a 16-page portrait picture book 260 mm high by 210 mm wide. This is the size and shape of the book they need to write, edit, design and illustrate.

Note: An A4 piece of paper is 297mm x 210mm. An A3 is 297mm x 420mm.



# Identify the features of a picture book

- With your class, analyse lots of picture books. How are they put together? Where do the words go? How do the pictures and the text relate to each other?
- Start with the cover and title page? What jobs do they do?
- Work right through to the back-cover blurb. It has an important job to do. What is it?
- These conversations will help to create a common vocabulary in your learning community. They will give the students time to get their heads around terms such as “character”, “illustration”, and “blurb”.
- Create class displays of different illustration styles: photographs, collage, and graphic novel, for example. ➤





So they lifted their sisters, as fast as pouring paint.  
This time, they all started off together.

Elle's hat flopped down over her eyes again.  
She still couldn't see where she was going.

Mosama's hat toppled off her head again.  
She began to lose her balance.

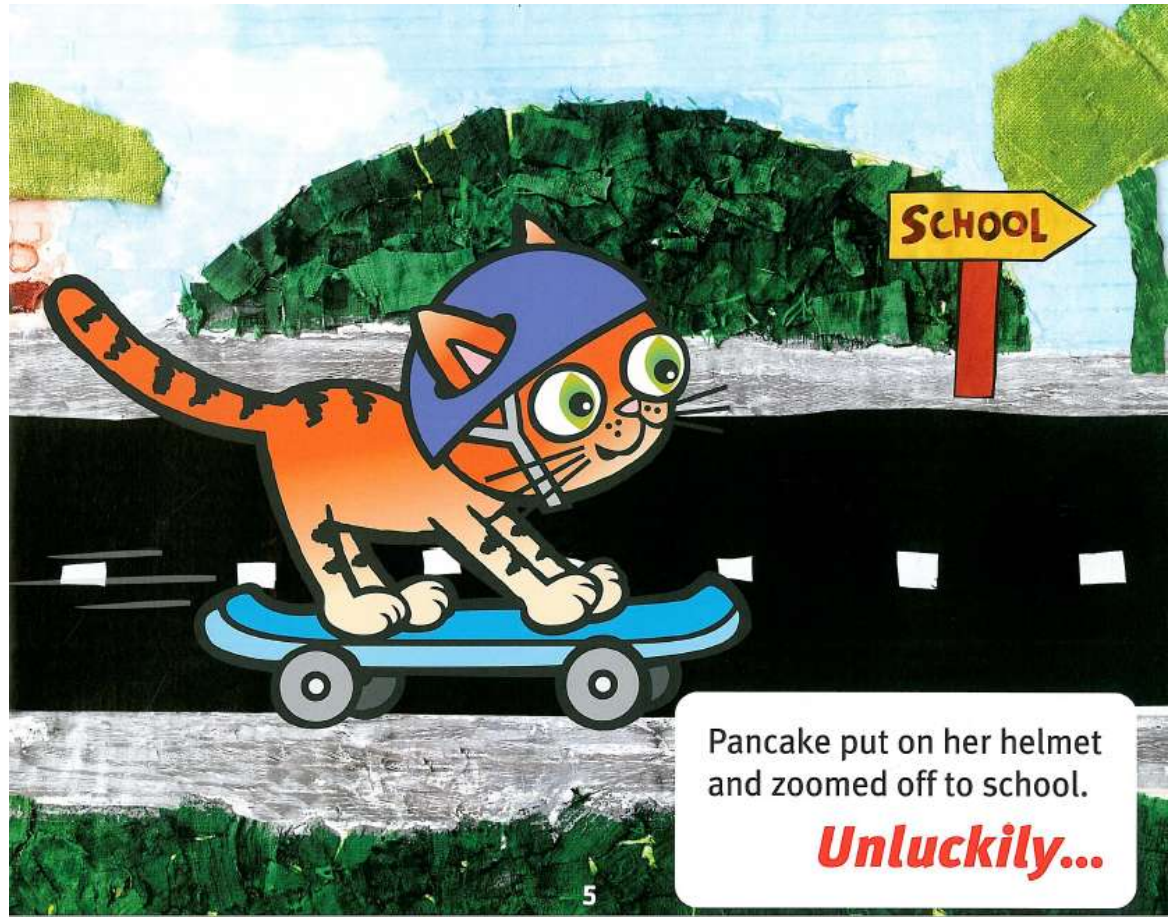
## Pop-quiz

- What's the back-cover blurb's job?
- Why would you use a double-page spread?
- How could you start the story on the title page but *still* have a title page?
- When might you put *just* an illustration on a page (and no words)?
- As well as photographs, collage, and graphic novel-style illustrations, what are two more illustration styles? ➤

## Workshop tip

Stories that take place horizontally lend themselves to the landscape format. Think of roads and walking school buses!

Keep the action moving left to right. A skateboard could zoom out of the picture, heading off to the right. ➤



## Question

If horizontal stories lend themselves to the landscape format, who can think of a story that would lend itself to the portrait format?



# Angles and points of view

Have students cut photos out from magazines. Imagine they are behind the camera. Discuss different angles and points of view in some of the photos. For example:

- ask students to find:
  - a long/full/wide shot (showing the entire subject in their environment)
  - a medium shot (close enough to show facial expression, but far enough back to show body language)
  - a close-up (eg just the upper part of the body, the head or eye)
- ask students to find more specific shot types (eg looking directly down on the subject – a bird's-eye shot)
- ask students to identify different angles (eg low and high).

Write these terms on a big sheet of paper and add it to the knowledge bank you are building up. This could be pinned up on your classroom wall.

Students can note that illustrations in picture books are like photos. They are also taken from different angles and points of view. Look at the selection of picture books you have chosen. Find a variety of angles and points of views. For example, an illustration:

- that looks like it was drawn from far away
- that looks like the illustrator has flown up into the air and drawn the picture from above, looking down
- in which the point of view is looking up from the ground
- in which the point of view is looking over someone's shoulder.

Students can note that the same point of view, the same angle, on every page can be boring.

Tell your students that when they come to do their illustrations they can use different angles and points of view, but remind them that whatever they choose for each illustration, it needs to help tell the story otherwise it will just confuse the reader.

A bird's-eye shot or extreme long shot can be used to establish a scene.

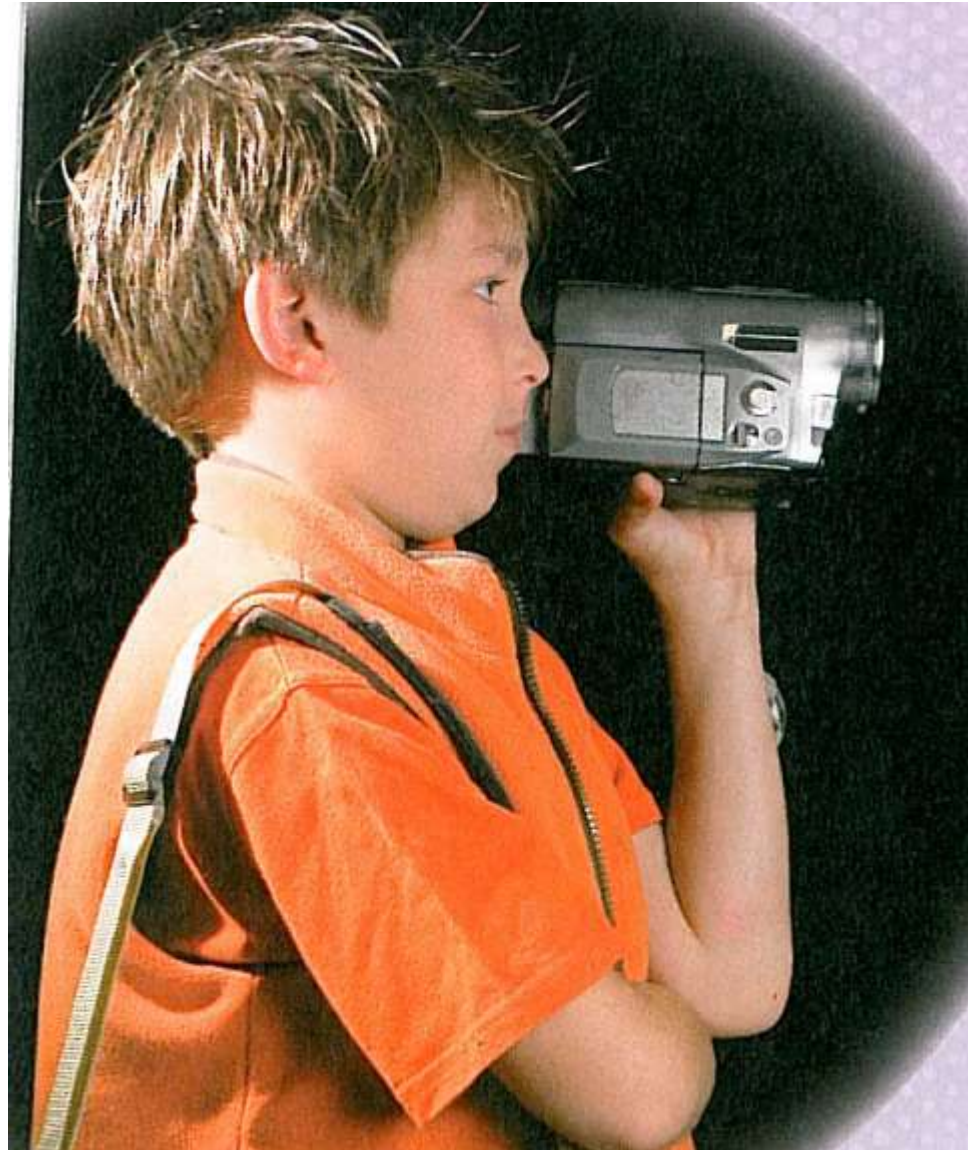
- Close-ups can add drama.
- A high-angle shot can make the subject look small, vulnerable or insignificant; or establish the viewer as large and powerful or threatening.



## Workshop tip

As the children work on the illustrations, they pretend to be cameras on a cell phones. They imagine climbing up a ladder and looking down. They imagine crouching and looking up.

They think like movie directors. They use a wide shot to convey the setting for the story. They zoom in on the action. In a big close up of a face we see a character's reaction. ➤



# Choose an illustration style

Illustrations need to back up the narrative and add extra interest and information.

Students should decide on a style for their illustrations. For example, are they going to be realistic and lifelike or fanciful and bizarre? What medium are they going to use. Suggestions are:

- line art, eg cartoons
- a collage of line art and photos
- photos
- photos of scenes created in shoe boxes using models.

Rearrange the example picture books by illustration style. Get students to label the different illustration styles.

Think about consistency of style from page to page. If lots of people are going to work on the book, how will they make the illustrations look as if they all belong together?

Think about the age group that the picture book is aimed at and the kinds of illustrations that appeal to that audience. Identify which illustrations appeal to the audience. Which illustrations are the most successful? Why?



## Group challenge

Working in groups of four:

- brainstorm two ideas for a picture book about travelling to school actively and safely
- compose a two-sentence back-cover blurb for one of the ideas
- work out why the book should be landscape or portrait.

Pick a spokesperson to present your idea to the workshop. ➤



# Write a page-turner!

There are lots of different kinds of picture books, eg fiction, non-fiction and poems (where a line or two of the poem appears on each page).

A great place to start is writing the beginning and the ending. Picture book stories are essentially beginnings that grab the reader's attention, endings that feel deeply satisfying, and journeys from one to the other.

Answer the following questions:

- Who is this story about (the characters)?
- Where is the story happening (the setting)?
- When is this story taking place?
- What's happening to the characters (the plot)?

Try writing these questions on a whiteboard and brainstorm possible answers. Highlight the most popular response to each question.

Work in groups and challenge students to come up with the beginning that is the most attention-grabbing and the ending that feels the most satisfying.

Using examples from a range of picture books, discuss two features that epitomise great picture book text:

- The text constantly creates 'and what happens next' moments (page-turners).
- The text on each page can be illustrated (it mentions a single, important action taking place at one time, in one place).

Find out why a paragraph that involves multiple activities should be spread over a few pages. For example, leaving a house, walking past the shops, and arriving at school is really the text for three pages. Rewrite this paragraph into a series of page-turners, for example, 'and then where did they go?'... (turn the page)... past the shops etc).

- At the start of the mock-up (on page 2, after the title page), have the students write their attention-grabbing beginning.
- On the last page of the mock-up (either page 15 or 16), have them write their deeply satisfying ending.

The next task is to gradually build a story and plan a series of illustrations that get the reader from the beginning to the end with as many page-turner moments built in as possible.

Remember that the text for each page needs to lend itself to the illustration.

- It is hard to draw an invisible ghost. A story that consists of a conversation between two people tends to look the same in every illustration.
- You can't show someone getting on and off a bike in the same illustration.

A good way for the groups to work is with thumbnails arranged into a storyboard. Thumbnails are rough sketches of what a page might look like. Arranged into panels, thumbnails become a storyboard.

The story could end on the last double-page spread (p14-15) and an illustration could go here (p16).



The centre of the book is the best place to pop a double-page spread.  
The same sheet of paper (folded in half) is used across the spread.  
On other pages, you'll need to consider that the two halves of the illustration might not line-up perfectly when the book is put together.

back cover

# Use thumbnails in a storyboard to plan strong picture/text links

## Words

When writing the text, it is important to consider how:

- words hook the reader from the outset
- words build into sentences and paragraphs and finally, an organised story with a logical progression of ideas – a beginning, middle, and an ending using transition words to connect everything together
- sentence fluency makes a story flow
- precise word choice makes for better communication. For example, 'nice dog' could be replaced by friendly, gentle or respectful dog
- words bring a story to an appropriate ending
- words enable readers to hear the writer's style/ voice/personality, or make the writer sound like someone else.

## Linking text to the illustrations

After creating first drafts in the form of a rough storyboard, it is important that on every page there is a link between what they've written and what the illustrations will show.

Find examples of good picture/text links. (The ready to read series is also a good source.) With each example, find the link between the text for a page and the proposed illustration. For example, for text that is about a pukeko, is there a pukeko (or part of a pukeko) in the illustration?



# Thumbnails to sketches

## Illustrating the book

Before launching into illustrations, take time as a class to carefully reconsider the chosen storyboard.

- What really needs to be shown on each page?
- Would a different angle or point of view create more interest?

Adjusting the thumbnails in the storyboard is a good time to think about where the text will be placed.

Words are yet to be added. Find examples of text placement in the picture book selection. 'When you turn a page in a picture book, do you look at the illustration or read the words first?' Have a show of hands to see who does what.

Discuss where the words should be placed on the pages:

- Will they be in a separate box from the illustration or in the illustration? If in the illustration, suggest planning illustrations with big, pale areas of sky, grass or floor where the words could go. Ask them to consider how much grass or sky is needed for the number of words on the page.
- Can words go on pages facing the illustrations?
- What about underneath the illustrations?



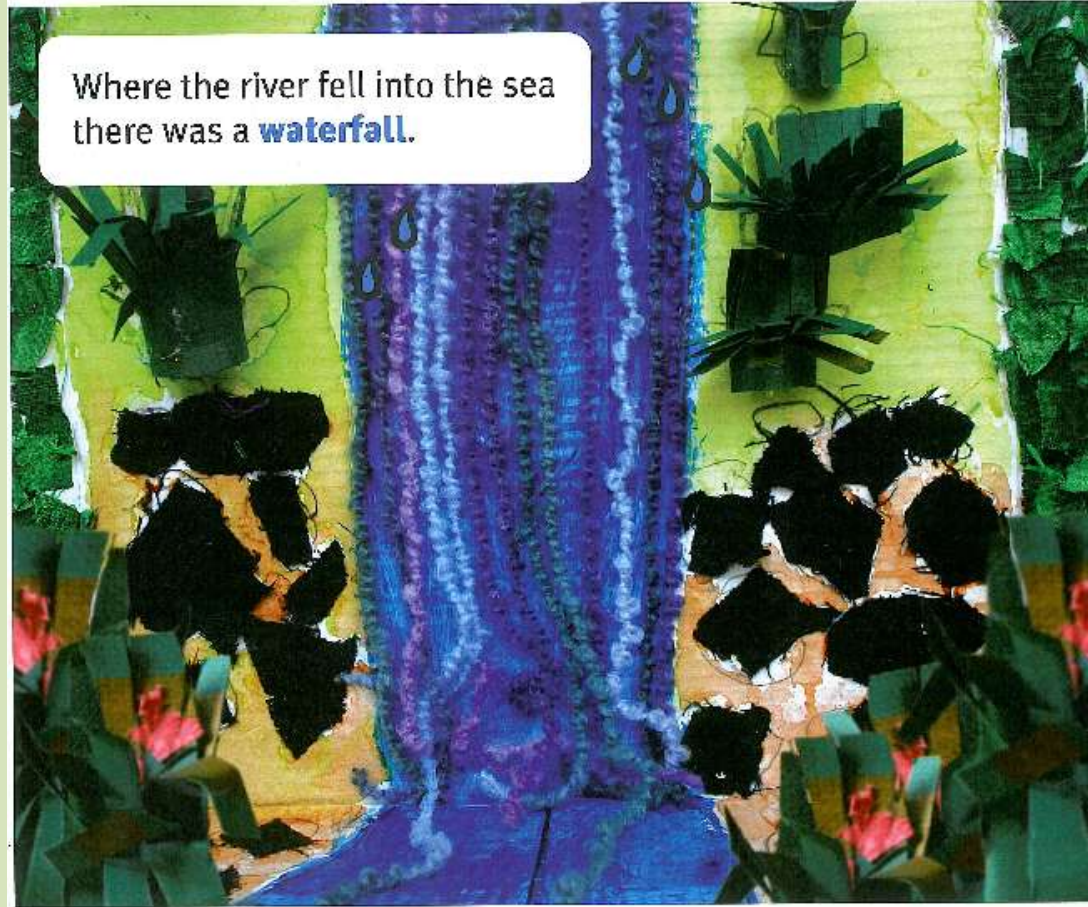
From the thumbnails, have students draw simple, full-size pencil sketches (this isn't the final art work). Use erasers to correct mistakes and make the sketches look better. Lay them out on the floor as a big storyboard. Discuss:

- Does everything look good?
- Do the roughs still make sense?
- Is there enough room for the words?
- Are characters walking towards the direction of the story (left to right)?

Photocopy and glue or tape the copies into the mock-up.

## Final art workshop tip

Working in groups, *everyone* can contribute to collage artwork. This is a great way to create the backgrounds. ➤



# Test-run and check-list your entry

## Getting feedback

At this stage it might be useful for the students to share their work with a another class to gain some feedback.

Establish a list of specific questions to ask the audience to measure what works well.

Use the feedback to improve the final book.

**Tip for teachers:** Children know what children will want to read.

## Background information required for successful illustrations

Students can start drawing or assembling the final, colour pictures using the black-and-white roughs to guide them.

- Not every page needs to be completely coloured in. A nice technique is to have some busy pages, followed by a clean one, with clear-cut foreground characters on a plain white (or one-colour) background.
- Lots of bright, strong colours, with block areas of colour reproduce well.

Possible problems:

- Feltpens, coloured pencils and uneven colouring-in don't reproduce well.
- Pale colours don't reproduce well.
- Out-of-focus or slightly out-of-focus photos don't reproduce well.

## Looking ahead

One entry will win the competition. It could be an entry from your class. As part of the prize, the winning class will take part in a three-day workshop with a professional picture book writer/editor and a picture book designer/illustrator.

If your entry doesn't win, why not create a copy of what you've made for the school library for students to take home to share with their families.

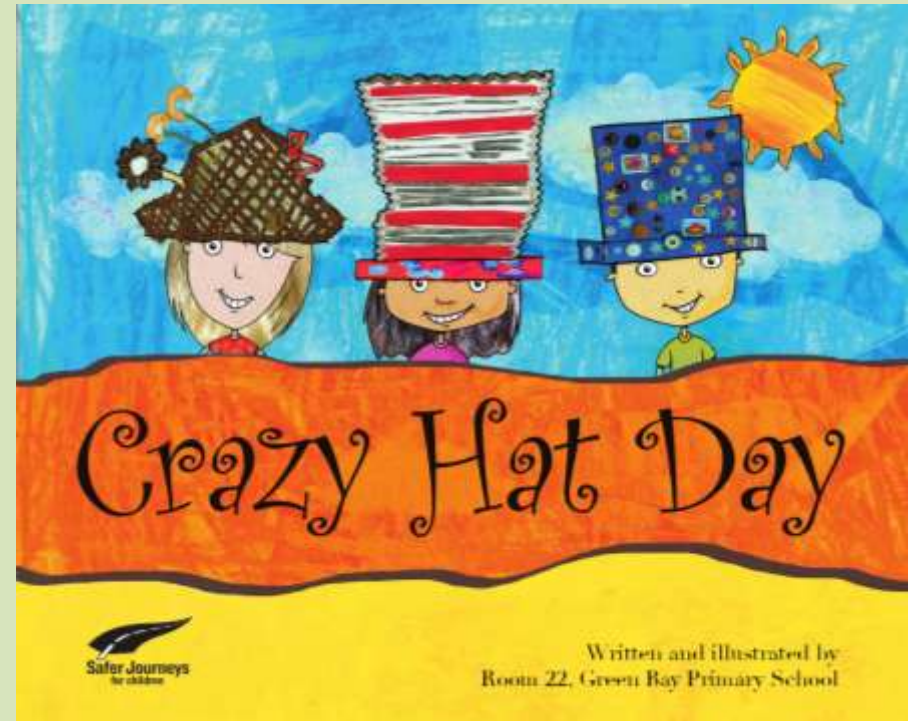
## To finish

Go through the entry checklist (see Entry pack) with your class. Have all the entry conditions been ticked off?

# Tips and insights from Kathy Chandler

Kathy Chandler's class at Green Bay Primary School won the competition last year with *Crazy Hat Day*. How did Room 22 do it?

- We looked at lots of picture books and analysed why the children like them.
- We looked at a wide variety of picture books and analysed their formats, covers content, and back-cover blurbs.
- We looked at the relationship between pictures and text and what makes a book really enjoyable in the first place. ➤



## Informed brainstorming

- We looked at the format of picture books, the number of pages they have, the interaction between the illustrations and text, and how to make each page interesting and keep the reader's interest.
- We looked at the way picture books have plots and a good ending - with interesting characters.
- *Then* we brainstormed ideas.  
➤

# Ways of working

- The whole class worked in groups to create the different characters.
- I had a fantastic creative parent who really helped to draw out the children's ideas.
- We selected some class artists to develop these ideas further.
- When the professional illustrator and book designer worked with the class later, she involved all the children in creating collage backgrounds, self-portraits, and the crazy hats. ➤

## Enthusiasm and passion

- I also had two teacher aides working in my class with an autistic boy and they were very helpful.
- I think that having other enthusiastic adults involved helps a lot ...  
... but also create a love of books, reading, and writing in the children. Being passionate about picture books instils a sense of what's possible! ➤

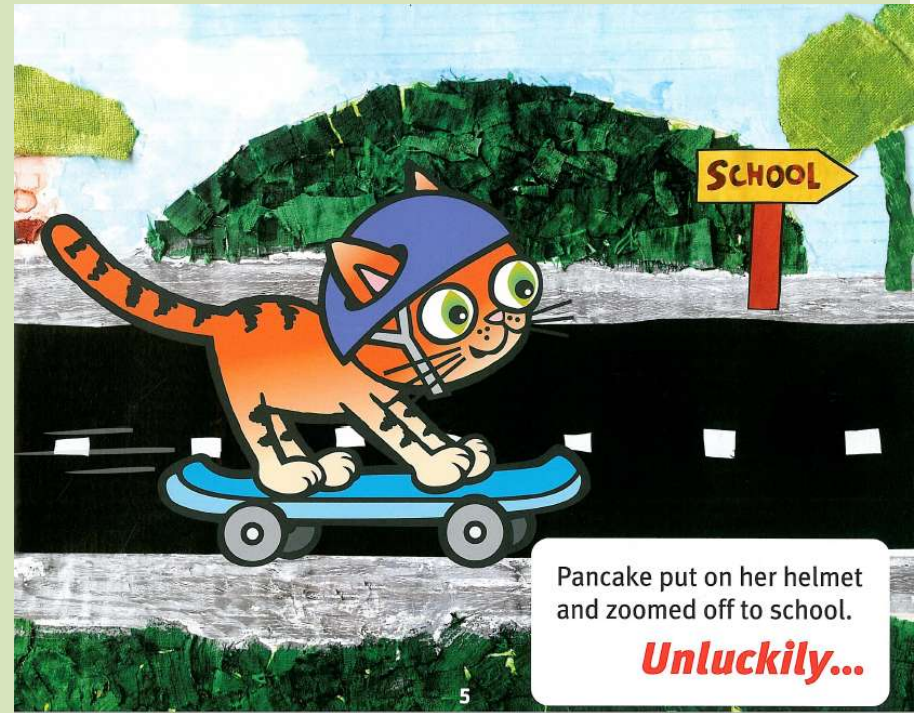
## Involve everyone

- Everyone was involved. The autistic boy contributed with collage, his self-portrait, and created a visual simile (of a dinosaur, his favourite animal), working with his teacher aides.
- If I could do anything differently, I would probably try to involve the whole class in the art work from the start so that they all feel ownership right from the beginning, although they very much did by the time the book was finished.

# Tips and insights from Kathryn Cochet

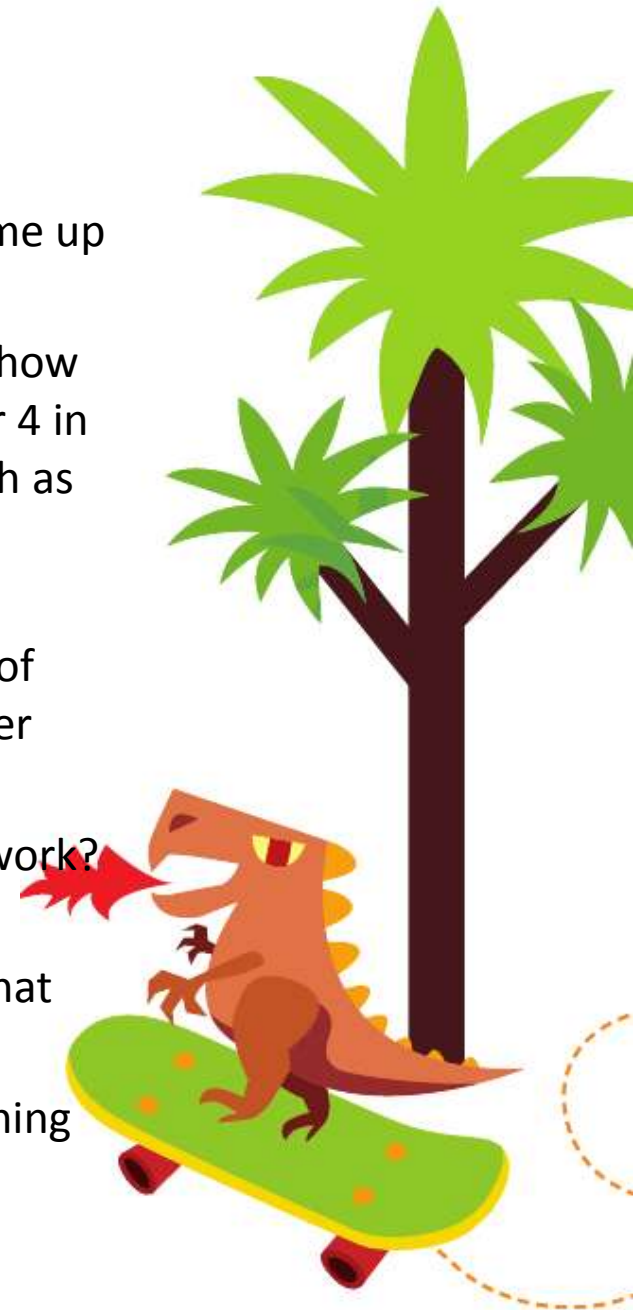
Kathryn Cochet's class at Otonga Primary School won the competition in 2009 with *Pancake's Lucky Adventure*.

How did Kathryn and Room 2 do it? Let's ask her ...



## Some questions for Kathryn

- What's a good way to get started? How did your class come up with their terrific idea in the first place?
- Once your class had the basic idea for their picture book, how did you scaffold the actual writing (thinking about chapter 4 in *Effective Literacy Practice in Years 1 to 4* and activities such as shared writing, interactive writing, guided writing, and independent writing)?
- How did you give your students insights into the features of picture books, such as double-page spreads and back-cover blurbs?
- Were you able to involve the whole class in doing the artwork? How?
- Looking back on your experience, what were two things that helped your class do so well and win the competition?
- If you were doing the whole thing again, what's the one thing that you'd do differently?



## Follow-ups

Taking part in the competition created a passion for writing at Green Bay School. So much so that it has spawned a **lunchtime writers' class**. Some other ways to build on the experience:

- Invite a writer to do a creative writing workshop with your class through the **Writers in Schools Programme**  
[http://www.bookcouncil.org.nz/Education/Programme\\_Overview/Writers\\_in\\_Schools.htm](http://www.bookcouncil.org.nz/Education/Programme_Overview/Writers_in_Schools.htm)
- Have a class Skype conversation with a writer through **Book Talks**  
<http://www.booktalks.org.nz/>
- Have a **Creative Coaching** writer-in-resident in your class  
[http://www.bookcouncil.org.nz/Education/Programme\\_Overview/Creative\\_Coaching\\_writer\\_residencies.htm](http://www.bookcouncil.org.nz/Education/Programme_Overview/Creative_Coaching_writer_residencies.htm)
- With year 7 and 8 students, enter the *School Journal's* **Elsie Locke Writing Prize**. Details at <http://www.learningmedia.co.nz/contributors/writers-and-editors>
- Write for *Stone Soup*, a journal of young people's writing at <http://www.stonesoup.com/>