Practical Ideas to Support Writing

Skills used for writing:
- Motor skills
- Knowledge of language: vocabulary, spelling, word grammar, sentence grammar, syntax, punctuation.
- Ability to organise and structure ideas.
- Confidence in ability to write.
- There is also: patience, hand/eye coordination, tracking (losing place), reading, pencil grip, position of seating, being able to transfer ideas onto paper, stamina, purpose and understanding of genre, motivation, placement on page, orientation of letters.

Some strategies:
- What we can do to help:
    o Handwriting and motor difficulties – Fizzy and Clever Hands, Teodorescu etc.
    o Spelling and grammar rules: provide models. Mnemonics can be useful here.
    o Getting started and generating ideas.
    o Getting ideas down on paper – providing opportunities for planning.
    o Organising ideas – providing support for structuring.
    o Self-editing and proof-reading.
    o Providing encouragement and motivation.
    o Providing alternative methods to record ideas, e.g. Clicker 7, Talking Tins etc.
- Handwriting: it is worth checking table/chair height, sitting position, consistent use of writing hand, position of writing hand, non-writing hand hold paper steady, letter formation, use of cursive writing style. Pencil grips and the use of Fizzy and Clever Hands may help.
- Generating ideas: keep away from a blank sheet of paper, break the task down into smaller subtasks, set the scene with examples (read a story or poem; show a film or video game), discuss and brainstorm, set the children to work in groups, feed in vocabulary and/or sentence frames, use different formats (poems, drama, cartoon, animation, story-board (, emphasise ideas and not accuracy, try imposing a strict limit on the number of words that can be written.
- Draw out the language by helping the children generate adjectives using the five senses.
- Writing at higher levels: Difficulties for dyslexic students may be speed of writing and getting ideas down onto paper; identifying what has been asked (understanding the question); deciding what or how much to include; structuring; accuracy of writing and grammar; timing (for exams and grammar); proof-reading; issues with confidence and self-esteem.
- REMEMBER TO MAKE WRITING A FUN, CREATIVE PROCESS. BE POSITIVE AND ENCOUAGING. FIND WAYS TO HELP YOUR PUPILS TO SUCCEED.

Additional resources and ideas
- Practise tweeting a story – make use of only 140 characters. This will help to identify the main points.
- Play consequences around the classroom or group to help generate ideas (folded piece of paper to write the next part of the story and pass on to peer).
- Play 'My Mother's Cat…'.
- Teaching a child to touch type. Dance Mat Typing from the BBC http://www.bbc.co.uk/guides/z3c6tfr is a useful free resource.
- Use visualisation, e.g. close eyes and picture a haunted house. Ask question to gather ideas and vocabulary – where? when? who? what? why? how? Post-it notes could be a useful tool to record ideas.
- Create a storyboard – this can allow predictive skills to develop. (Some useful websites below):
    o https://www.printablepaper.net/category/storyboard
    o http://www.the-flying-animator.com/storyboard-template.html
    o http://storykeepers.wikispaces.com/StoryBoarding
    o http://www.primaryresources.co.uk/english/english.htm#C
    o Or make your own – one image per sheet, number them, lay them out in order, write a brief description under them.
- Physical models can be made and then used to verbally rehearse the story first. A recording device such as an iPad or Talking Tin could be used.
- Collaborative writing

- Give children a grid similar to the one below but based upon the topic. Allow them the opportunity to generate ideas:

Generating adjectives:

Article	Size	Appearance	Feel	Noun
A				gorilla
The				bully
An				apple
The				battlefield
The				mountaineer

- Make use of the five senses when describing something. A chart similar to the one below could be used to help organise thoughts:

prickly smooth	bright dazzling	crashing shrill	pungent perfumed	sour salty

- Vocabulary aids: word cogs, index cards, word mats, personalised word banks, group words in categories (a semantic dictionary could be used), vocabulary scales – order words from weakest to strongest, e.g. which is more frightened: 'scared' or 'petrified'?
- http://writingexercises.co.uk/index.php is a good site to find starters for writing.
- Make use of sequencing activities – put pictures into order and then ask the child to tell the story.
- Templates are useful for generating and structuring ideas. The Sue Palmer templates are good:
  - o http://www.lancsngfl.ac.uk/curriculum/english/download/file/TheSixTextTypesSkeletons.pdf
  - o https://www.glenlolacollegiate.net/download/general_curriculum/curriculum_support_materials/Instruction%20(Advanced).pdf
  - o A google search such as 'sue palmer recount book' (recount, report, instructions, persuasion, discussion) will bring up downloadable PowerPoints or PDFs and also this website: http://www.bolsover-jun.derbyshire.sch.uk/pupil-zone/english-zone/sue-palmer-big-books
- Graphic organisers and mind maps can also be useful:
  - o https://www.eduplace.com/graphicorganizer/
  - o http://www.dailyteachingtools.com/free-graphic-organizers-w.html
  - o http://www.inspiration.com/
  - o https://imindmap.com/

Higher Level Writing.
- Proof-reading – swap with a partner, read from the bottom up, leave time between writing and proof-reading. Text-to-speech can be useful. Exam reading pens are available - http://www.wizcomtech.com/news-events/82-wizcomtech-launches-jcq-approved-new-pen-for-uk-market-exam-pen - it just one such company that can provide this technology.
- Tackling a written assignment:
  - o Teach how to break down questions.
  - o Provide scaffolding and teach planning and structuring skills.
  - o Teach specialist vocabulary.
  - o Break the task down into smaller units.
  - o Use reading texts as models for writing.
- Writing assignments. It is important for students to be able to decode the question:
  - o Topic area/subject matter – underline words that indicate subject matter.
  - o Limiting words/aspect/focus – highlight the words that control the discussion areas of the topic.
  - o Directive/instruction – highlight the words that direct approach/purpose/provide marking criteria (students need to identify these and understand what is being asked):

- Explain – state the 'how' and 'why'.
- Discuss – consider all sides of the argument.
- Describe – offer a detailed account.
- Compare – explore similarities and differences.
- Contrast – show differences between.
- Summarise – identify key ideas concisely.
- Trace – note turning points and stages.
- List – present an itemised series in concise form.
- Justify – present evidence to support decisions.
  - A Cornell Notes Template might be useful:
    http://www.usask.ca/ulc/sites/default/files/cornellnotetaker-template_0.pdf
- Planning and Writing:
  - Planning methods – mind mapping, post-it notes, flow charts, linear bullet points, colour coded notes on the computer, keep note of sources.
  - Structure – make use of a scaffolding grid, e.g. 10% intro, 70% content, 20% conclusion.
  - Paragraphs – identify topics and supporting ideas; teach signposting words; try jigsaw reading (https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/jigsaw-reading).
- Constructive marking:
  - Give clear criteria when the task is set.
  - Mark to these criteria.
  - Try to give prompt feedback.
  - Preferably mark in the pupil's presence.
  - Praise successes and set targets.
  - Keep targets small and manageable.
  - Use formative assessment.
  - Consider using peer marking.
  - Think of the process rather than the product.
  - Use Audacity or vocaroo.com for oral feedback.
- Encourage the use of ICT:
  - Dragon Dictate.
  - Clicker 7.
  - Word processing.
  - Learn to touch type.
  - Online wordbanks or thesaurus, e.g. http://www.visualthesaurus.com/
  - Ginger software: http://www.gingersoftware.com/
  - Online grammar checks, e.g. https://www.grammarly.com/1