

Wonderful world of words

CHATHAM High School students will be putting pen to paper each week, as part of the school's new 'iWrite' program, designed to improve the personal writing habits and creativity of every student.

All students will practice five minutes of sustained writing on a different topic each week.

The writing sessions will not only happen during English lessons, but in each subject area, as part of a whole-school approach to literacy improvement.

At the end of each five minute session, students will count how many words they have written and record the number on a chart, so that word count trends can be mapped throughout the term.

The program was launched at a whole-school assembly.

Teachers, students and members of the community spoke about why writing is important both personally and professionally.

Among the community speakers was local Great Lakes Advocate journalist, Mitchell Jennings. Mitchell brought half a dozen of his personal journals with him to show students that 'free writing', or writing when you think no one is going to read the results, is a great way to develop a relaxed writing style that can be used for self-expression or developed into a professional-level skill.

Teachers explained the importance of getting words down on the



Chatham High School students Cheyenne Abbott, Rachel Emmett and Gemma Doran are among the participants in the iWrite program.

page, with the only restriction being the use of full sentences.

A focus on spelling and grammar will be implemented at a later stage, but for now it is about the volume of words and the flow of thoughts into sentences.

English and history teacher, Kylee Owen said the idea for

iWrite was developed by the school's literacy team, who meet every fortnight to discuss ideas for whole-school projects.

"iWrite has been embraced by every faculty," Kylee said.

"The idea is to help students develop confidence in their writing. Many students are reluctant

writers due to a lack of confidence, which can affect their performance in exams.

"Eventually we will build on the program to include focus areas, like spelling and grammar, however for now we want to get the students comfortable with topic-based writing," she said.