



CASE STUDY REPORT

Best practice CPD to embed 'Talk for Writing' within a primary school

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This study was originally published in 2010 as part of the 'What Works Well' initiative, part of the National Strategies for Education in England.

Abstract

Background: The purpose of the study was to embed the philosophy of 'Talk for Writing' in order to raise standards in English and to develop two teachers en route 'from good to outstanding'.

Aims: The main aim of this development work was to embed the philosophy of 'Talk for Writing' in order to raise standards in English and create an engaging and enthusiastic learning environment for pupils.

Methods: The participants in this development work were the Headteacher, Local Authority Advisor for English, two lead teachers, and the whole school staff community. Methods used included modelling implementation of Talk for Writing in the classroom, providing training on the sequence of Talk for Writing, creating a classroom environment that supports learning, and providing CPD materials, research, and expertise.

Findings: The main findings of this case study are that Talk for Writing has had a positive impact on pupil learning, teaching, and school organization and leadership. It has resulted in improved writing scores, higher proportions of good and outstanding teaching, and distributed school leadership.

Implications: The findings suggest that Talk for Writing can be a key driver in raising standards in English, with pupils becoming more engaged and enthusiastic, and teachers empowered to apply the approach across the curriculum. This has led to improved test results, higher quality teaching, and distributed school leadership.

This abstract was generated by Camtree using a large language model (LLM) and added to the original report in 2023.

Keywords: Primary education; Communication, language and literacy; English - speaking and listening; English - writing

Introduction

What were your reasons for doing this type of development work?

Penn Wood School operates within distinctive and challenging circumstances; mobility is extremely high and combines with socio-economic deprivation and English as an additional language (EAL). We needed to embed the philosophy of 'Talk for Writing' efficiently, believing it had the potential to be a key driver in raising standards in English. The Headteacher and Local Authority Advisor for English, working strategically together, recognised that the vision could be energised through the development of two teachers en route 'from good to outstanding'. The project developed creatively and organically and outcomes exceeded expectations in terms of raised standards in writing, pupil engagement and enthusiasm; development of whole school pedagogy and learning environment; personalised learning for teachers and pupils igniting a new approach to continuing professional development (CPD) and collaboration.

Who might find this case study useful?

- Head of school improvement
- Headteacher
- Senior leadership team (SLT)
- SIP (School Improvement Partner)
- Support staff
- Teacher

Description

What specific curriculum area, subject or aspect did you intend to have impact on?

- Communication, language and literacy
- English - speaking and listening
- English - writing

How did you intend to impact on pupil learning?

- Using talk to stimulate writing
- Using ICT to stimulate talking and writing

What were your success criteria?

- Total pupil engagement – boys and girls
- Writing viewed as purposeful
- Pupils competent in the craft of writing
- Pupils attaining higher standards and making accelerated progress

What information or data did you use to measure progress towards your success criteria?

- Learning walks / study visits
- Observation outcomes
- Periodic teacher assessment
- Pupils' work
- Test results

Describe the CPD approaches you used

Modelling the implementation of Talk for Writing within the classroom setting for newly appointed colleagues. Working closely with Roots to Wings colleague in planning and teaching Talk for Writing, looking at the process and phrases of writing. Demonstrating the various principles and practises of Talk for Writing during insets, modelling how they are used within the classroom. Providing training on the sequence of Talk for Writing to colleagues during insets.

Working within the LA and with colleagues from neighbouring LA on the implementation of a purposeful interactive working wall, (work shared with Pie Corbett.) Providing a classroom environment which supports the pupils' learning and supports the CPD of colleagues. Working closely with FS2 colleague in ensuring that the principles and pedagogies of Talk for Writing are being developed across the whole school and identifying areas for CPD for individuals.

Who provided you with support?

- Local authority staff
- School leader

How were you supported?

- Strategic working relationship and partnership between the authors of this case study (Head Teacher and LA Adviser).
- Commitment and dedication from two lead teachers and whole staff community Pupil engagement and enthusiasm.

Impact

What has been the overall impact on pupil learning?

Children see themselves as writers and are totally engaged.

Thoughts you think are relevant to overall impact on learning

- Leadership of practitioners (aspiring ASTs in FS2 and Y6) driving force in partnership with SLT and LA.
- Headteacher and LA adviser allowed and supported 'freedom' to respond immediately and creatively to training, to celebrate impact and success and disseminate new practice at school, LA and neighbouring LA level.
- ICT, moving image and learning environment (working walls in particular).
- Whole-school writing moderation (3 times a year against common criteria).

Quotes you think are relevant to overall impact on learning

Reluctant boy writer: 'It's my best subject now.'

Reluctant boy writer: 'I feel that I have been on a journey. I didn't like writing before now it's the best lesson because now I know I can do it.'

Hidden girl writer: 'Writing is so much fun because it is interesting and creative.'

Underachieving boy writer: 'I can magpie ideas from my friends and from the working wall, which helps me to start writing.'

Underachieving girl writer: 'Because we talk about our writing and learn actions I know what I have to put in my

own writing.'

LA advisor: 'Your lesson reminded me of the days when scholars would sit around and talk for days before committing to paper and you remember that talk does produce great ideas and pieces of work.'

Quantitative evidence of impact on pupil learning

- Data comparison of cohorts
- Periodic teacher assessment
- Test results

Qualitative evidence of impact on pupil learning

- Learning walks / study visits
- Observation outcomes
- Pupils' work

Describe the evidence of impact on pupil learning

2 sub levels or more progress in writing within an academic year – teacher assessment:

- Y2 boys 84%; Y2 girls 97%
- Y3 boys 100%; Y3 girls 100%
- Y4 boys 100%; Y4 girls 95%
- Y5 boys 94%; Y5 girls 100%
- Y6 boys 100%; Y6 girls 96%

Improved EYFS scores in writing

Y6 Tests Girls improved by 19%; Boys 28%.

What has been the impact on teaching?

- LA grading the school's teaching and learning as outstanding overall in June 09.
- AST assessor awarded the two teachers leading this project AST status and used words such as 'inspiring'; 'exceptional teaching'; 'exciting learning environment'; 'excellent progress' in the written reports.
- Teaching across the school more consistent, innovative, imaginative, based on ICT and media and a shared understanding of pedagogy (Talk for Writing).
- Teachers are prepared to share their experiences/learning with colleagues during INSET sessions and this has empowered all to take risks, apply theory to practice, use ICT and experience to ignite writing.
- Teachers are empowered to apply 'Talk for Writing' approach and working walls across the curriculum.
- Teachers have confidence in their abilities progress the development of writing through demonstration of the author's craft.

Quotes you think are relevant to the impact on teaching

- 'I was given an opportunity to attend an inspirational Pie Corbett day. Once back at school I was trusted and positively encouraged to take a risk, change plans and explore talk for writing strategies'
- 'It was obvious to me that the approach was a truly fit-for-purpose pedagogy for the children in our school.'

- 'The approach facilitated talk between staff who may not have immediately identified a shared need to discuss the development of the writing and exchange ideas e.g an FS2 teacher and a Year 6 teacher.'
- Headteacher: 'I observed the emotional climate in classrooms changing; it became difficult to 'observe' in the traditional sense as my own intellectual and emotional engagement took over. It was magical.'
- Headteacher: 'There has been a transformation – the focus is on learning.'

Evidence of impact on teaching

- Evidence from observation and monitoring
- Evidence from planning
- Teacher perceptions

Describe the evidence of impact on teaching

- High proportion of teaching now judged to be good and outstanding (LA Review June 2009).
- Staff learning has impacted on teaching.
- Personalisation of learning can take place because the pedagogies are fit for purpose and embraced across the school.

In 'Implementing Every Child a Writer' (ref: 00179-2009BKT-EN) a teacher from Penn Wood can be seen delivering a guided writing session (DVD).

What has been the impact on school organisation and leadership?

School leadership now more distributed and at a higher level of engagement through the development of two teachers leading on 'Talk for Writing'.

Cross phase links firmly embedded across the school.

Organisation has become more driven by learning and less by systems and processes e.g set time for monitoring books in English replaced by a more appropriate response to a whole school focus - the real camel that came to school resulted in everybody writing purposefully, independently and creatively. A cross phase team then monitored and evaluated the work and fed back whole school and year group learning points.

Two ASTs now in place.

Less of a reliance on LA Advisor and Headteacher lead in CPD sessions.

Evidence of impact on school organisation and leadership

- LA Review outcomes for leadership and teaching and learning – grade 1.
- Improved scores in writing (EYFS) and improved results at KS1.
- High proportion of pupils make two levels of progress from KS1 - KS2.
- Demonstrable accelerated progress at KS2.

See school website for evidence of the school's learning disposition and culture.

Summary

What is the crucial thing that made the difference?

Headteacher and LA Advisor partnership and commitment to leadership of learning.

What CPD session and resources were particularly useful?

- Moving Image training – focusing on engaging all learners through the use of ICT and visual media.
- Moving Image 2 – focusing on engaging underachieving and reluctant boy writers.
- Pie Corbett 'Talk for Writing and Talking the Text Type' seminars.
- Working with colleagues from within the LA and from other LAs who have adopted the pedagogies for writing and discussing the impact Talk for Writing has had.

If another individual or school was attempting to replicate this work, where would they start and what would the essential elements be?

- To ensure the full support of the Headteacher, SLT and staff in order to gain the 'freedom' to respond immediately and creatively to training.
- Good CPD training is offered to designated individuals who are able to disseminate good practice amongst colleagues through quality insets and individual mentoring.
- Colleagues are continually well supported and feel confident in embracing and implementing the pedagogies and principles of Talk for Writing.
- Regular monitoring to ensure that there is continuity throughout the whole school and to offer further CPD to colleagues.
- To become familiar with the pedagogies of Talk for Writing.
- Visit schools where Talk for Writing is embedded within the whole school pedagogy and learning environment.

What further developments are you planning to do (or would you like to see others do)?

Philosophy and the pedagogies to extend further across every subject area and into aspects of school life such as school productions and whole school projects. We would encourage schools to embark upon a 'Talk for Writing' learning journey. It is a 'way of working' with positive outcomes for not just writing but the learning environment and the school leadership of learning.

Supplementary Materials

This report is accompanied in the library by the following supplementary material:

- 360 Cities and Crazy Talk Lesson Plan
- Father Christmas Lesson Plan
- Hot Air Balloon Lesson Plan
- Jack and the Beanstalk Writing Lesson Plan
- Myst III Lesson Plan
- Paws Bear Pirate Lesson Plan
- Talk for Writing in Reception
- Phase one of Talk for Writing imitating through drama
- Phase one of Talk for Writing imitating
- An example writing outcome from the Myst III lesson
- Another example writing outcome from the Myst III lesson
- Another example writing outcome from the Myst III lesson - part 2
- Myst III Pupil Quote

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This case study was originally published as part of the 'What Works Well' section of the National Strategies for Education in England. The National Strategies were professional programmes aiming for improvements in the quality of learning and teaching in schools in England. 'What Works Well' involved teaching practitioners from all phases and areas of education sharing accounts of real developments which had improved learning and teaching, and made a difference to pupil progress. 'What Works Well' case studies were designed to support practice transfer and include sufficient detail and resources to enable others to implement the effective practice described. They were reviewed by experts prior to publication as 'User Generated Content' (UGC) under a licence which encouraged reuse and derivative works, but which precluded commercial use.

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