



## CASE STUDY REPORT

# Improving oral rehearsal skills to lead to quality written outcomes

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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 explore the impact of Talk for Writing on pupil learning, teaching, and school organization and leadership.

**Aims:** The main aim is to improve writing outcomes by integrating oral rehearsal and scaffolded talk throughout all phases of the writing process, leading to better quality written outcomes.

**Methods:** The participants in this case study are Ethel Wainwright primary school, the headteacher, SIP, teachers, LA consultant, and AST. They are working together to improve writing outcomes through talk for writing. Methods used to impact pupil learning included integrated oral rehearsal, scaffolded talk, focused questioning, and walk and talk activities to encourage internalization of language structure and better quality written outcomes.

**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 outcomes, increased confidence in writing, and increased teacher confidence in using a range of drama and speaking and listening techniques.

**Implications:** The findings suggest that Talk for Writing can have a positive impact on pupil learning, teaching, and school organization and leadership. It requires support from the Headteacher and SLT, CPD training, and regular monitoring to ensure continuity and identify further training needs.

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

**Keywords:** Primary education; English - speaking and listening; English - writing

## Introduction

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

Ethel Wainwright is a large primary school serving part of the Ladybrook estate in Mansfield. The area is predominantly white British although there are 14% of children with English as an additional language. There are currently 340 children on roll with 34% of children in receipt of free school meals. The school has recently come out of Special Measures.

Data identified underachievement in writing and so raising standards in writing is a whole school focus on our school development plan. Although speaking and listening activities with high expectations were embedded in my classroom, often writing outcomes did not reflect the progress evident in speaking and listening sessions. When I was asked by our literacy consultant to be a part of the talk for writing working party I was delighted to learn more about oral rehearsal, to develop and refine my own practice and in my capacity as AST (Advanced Skills Teacher) to support my own school and other schools to implement talk for writing to lead to better quality written outcomes.

### Who might find this case study useful?

- Headteacher
- SIP (School Improvement Partner)
- Teacher

## Description

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

- English - speaking and listening
- English - writing

### How did you intend to impact on pupil learning?

- By engaging children with the whole process a writer goes through to shape a text, starting with imitation using body actions; then loitering with the text until the children could talk the text towards innovation.
- Encouraging a talk for writing culture in my classroom where stealing ideas was seen in a positive light.
- Through talk, scaffolding language structures to improve overall text cohesion.
- Focused questioning alongside book talk and writer talk to encourage children to discover why certain words and language structures were chosen by the author.

### What were your success criteria?

- Can the children orally rehearse parts of a text to help them internalise the language structure?
- Integrated oral rehearsal and scaffolded talk throughout all phases which focuses on children amending and refining their vocabulary.
- Accelerated progress with better quality independent writing outcomes.

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

- Periodic teacher assessment
- Pupils' work

## Describe the CPD approaches you used

A video of my developing practice was used to model and demonstrate some of the talk for writing strategies to whole staff on an INSET day.

Speaking and listening staff meeting to develop and share ideas. I monitored planning alongside the literacy subject leaders to ensure a range of activities were identified in green.

Informal learning conversations happen on a day to day basis to share, develop and adapt practice.

## What CPD materials, research or expertise have you drawn on?

Talk for writing development group led by LA consultant.

Related national strategies resources

## Who provided you with support?

- External agency
- Senior management

## How were you supported?

I was invited by an LA literacy consultant to be part of a talk for writing working party to learn about, develop, refine and share my experience of implementing talk for writing with my own class. I then began to cascade methods of approaching talk for writing that I have trialled in my class to our staff team although this is still work in progress. In my AST outreach work I have shared examples of my practice in staff meetings, team teaching and lesson observations and the talk for writing culture is now becoming more embedded.

## Impact

### What has been the overall impact on pupil learning?

Improved writing outcomes which reflected the progress made due to integrated oral rehearsal at all phases, as children have internalised the language and structure of the text type.

Children are more confident to be adventurous in their word choices and actively encourage each other to refine their ideas.

Kinaesthetic learners, especially lower attaining boys, are motivated to take part in the lessons and become active learners when retelling their texts. They are now clearly writing for a purpose.

Qualitative evidence of impact on learning is supported by observation outcomes. HMI graded the talk for writing lesson they observed in my class to be outstanding. Children are much more aware of the text type, the audience and the purpose of writing. These skills are now being transferred across the curriculum.

### Thoughts you think are relevant to overall impact on learning

Children felt more confident and as a result more willing to write as they could talk the text. This is due to the fact that throughout all stages of planning and in the build to write their ideas were scaffolded, amended and refined and in conjunction with walk and talk, babble gabble and plenty of mangled ideas this led to better quality written outcomes.

'Walk and talk' is effective as it scaffolds opportunities for children to develop, practise and refine their ideas. It sets no ceiling on performance as children are encouraged to share ideas with a range of children. In this way my children took ownership of their own writing journey when developing and improving vocabulary themselves.

When children used their planning spontaneously and started to orally rehearse without being prompted, this emphasised the importance of loitering with the text type, the usefulness of scaffolded planning and the impact writer talk had had on my children.

### Quotes you think are relevant to overall impact on learning

'Resilient writers run risks.'

'If you can't talk it you can't write it.'

'Good writers are thieves so if you like it steal it and put it in your swag bag.'

### Quantitative evidence of impact on pupil learning

- Periodic teacher assessment

### Qualitative evidence of impact on pupil learning

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

### Describe the evidence of impact on pupil learning

Outcomes of pupil progress data. In a class with 5 EAL children (20%) and 9 SEN children (36%) for writing 100% of children made 1 or more sub level progress in writing compared to 59% of children in the parallel class not yet adopting talk for writing. 54% of children in the class made 2 or more sub levels progress compared to 0% in the parallel class. There has been a 24% increase of children achieving age related expectations at the end of the year in comparison with the start of the year in the class adopting talk for writing.

Looking at pupils' work - Narrowing gaps on APP and identifying next steps.

Learning walks have demonstrated that working walls are now being used to support pupils' language choices and magpieing is encouraged at all times.

### What has been the impact on teaching?

Teachers feeling more confident to use a range of drama and speaking and listening techniques. This has been given a higher status in every phase of the teaching sequence.

The development of working walls to support adventurous word choices and magpieing ideas supports interactive classroom environments.

Teaching has been more focused in the way it models and scaffolds the writing process. During supported composition there has been more evidence of the teacher in role of expert writer modelling how to use the oral rehearsal to draft then create high quality paragraphs. This makes the writing process more explicit for children. Reading as a writer has had an impact on shared and guided reading.

The case study was focused on non-fiction but this has now been extended into narrative.

Teaching is now judged to be good or better by HMI and our school has recently come out of the category of Special Measures.

## Quotes you think are relevant to the impact on teaching

'Word association games fire my children's imagination - it makes teaching vocabulary fun!'

'Writer talk helps my class have an open discussion about how a writer creates an effect.'

## Evidence of impact on teaching

- Evidence from observation and monitoring
- Evidence from planning

## Describe the evidence of impact on teaching

Work scrutiny, planning scrutiny and professional dialogue shows:

- a range of speaking and listening activities are being used across school across phases;
- opportunities for shared and guided writing are built into planning;
- opportunities for book talk are being applied to guided reading.

APP is being used in writing to identify gaps and to inform teacher's of their next steps to make teaching more focused on children's learning needs.

## What has been the impact on school organisation and leadership?

AST support in my school and another school has focused on the implementation of talk for writing.

Raising attainment with writing is a key part of the school development plan. Teachers' performance management target setting is also linked with it. It provides a key focus for LA consultant support, staff meetings and INSET days and CPD for staff.

Monitoring of whole school planning by the literacy subject leader focuses on speaking and listening activities - the cycle of assess and review ensures it is being embedded in planning and teaching. There is more progression and consistency across year groups.

## Evidence of impact on school organisation and leadership

AST asked to model good practice for talk for writing within school and in other schools. Model lessons to disseminate good practice with a focus on AfL/talk for writing strategies.

AST worked alongside LA consultant to facilitate the delivery of Y3 county training 'Engaging Year three pupils in literacy' with a focus on talk for writing.

AST working alongside literacy subject leader and LA consultant to deliver in house training to roll out talk for writing across school.

## Summary

### What is the crucial thing that made the difference?

Due to excellent training from the LA consultant, the leadership team has a clearer understanding of speaking and listening and so know what to look for during lesson observations/ planning scrutiny to lead the staff team. Talk for writing is given high priority and there is a shared understanding of the benefits of talk for writing.

## What key resources would people who want to learn from your experience need access to?

Talk for Writing seminars with Pie Corbett

## What CPD session and resources were particularly useful?

Pie Corbett 'Talk for Writing and Talking the Text Type' seminars.

The working party set up by our literacy consultant facilitated us to work with colleagues from within the LA who were trialling different approaches across a range of year groups. This enabled us to share best practice and to discuss the impact Talk for Writing was having in our schools and to magpie ideas to help us develop and extend our own practice.

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

Support of the Headteacher and SLT to prioritise staff training time which is needed to ensure there is a whole school understanding of the pedagogies of Talk for Writing. (Planning, delivery, teaching and learning, learning environment / ethos.)

CPD training offered at first to individuals who are able to trail and disseminate best practice amongst colleagues through staff meetings and individual mentoring. The driver or a working party across the school leads and supports the staff to implement the principles of Talk for Writing.

Regular monitoring will ensure that there is continuity throughout the school. It will also highlight further staff training needs.

Networking with other schools where Talk for Writing is embedded will help develop and share practice.

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

Whole school staff training has been prioritised for next term which will enable talk for writing to be disseminated throughout the school.

As I have been developing talk for writing for over a year it is my aim to extend the philosophy across other subject areas. This will support cross curricular independent writing outcomes across a range of genres.

## Supplementary Materials

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

- Writing outcome example
- Example of oral rehearsal outcome
- Planning unit for non-chronological reports
- Planning unit for stories set in another culture
- Writing sample 1
- Writing sample 2
- Oral rehearsal of text
- Writing outcome example - Fiction unit
- Writing outcome example - Non-fiction unit
- EAL poetry unit oral outcome example
- Example of oral rehearsal
- Oral rehearsal of text innovation

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## About 'What Works Well'

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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