



STAR INITIATIVE- 2007/8  
Supporting Through the Arts

**Primary Strategy - Literacy (Writing Focus) -  
Focused Support**

# **Final Evaluation Report**



**Anlaby Acre Heads  
Primary School**

## **Project Brief.**

### **Aims and objectives for taking part in the Star Initiative**

Our school's purpose in taking part in the Star initiative was to raise attainment in writing with a particular focus on boys' writing. Over the last couple of years one focus of our school improvement plan is to improve writing, particularly in the area of creating and shaping texts. After analysing the previous year's optional test results it was apparent that there was a particular group of reluctant writers within our current year four cohort, of which a large proportion are boys. We felt the Star initiative's creative, cross-curricular approach would help to inspire and motivate our children and also provide the teachers in year four the freedom and flexibility to experiment with new teaching and learning methods.

### **Writing concepts and skills targeted**

Our school is part of a cluster network group that focuses on improving writing particularly in the area of creating and shaping texts. As a cluster group we have taken part in the shared moderation of work and a CPD day on the Roz Wilson 'Big Writing' technique. Such training has meant that we now use punctuation and connective pyramids in every writing session. We also concentrate on vocabulary and sentence openers as part of the children's developing skills of editing and proof-reading through 'uplevelling.'

### **Artists in residence and key activities**

There were three artist residencies during the project: Gary Hammond, Michelle Dent and Bob Tonks. Gary Hammond worked in school for three days (15<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> January and 1<sup>st</sup> of February). He worked with the children to create soundtracks to Ancient Egyptian myths using a selection of weird and wonderful percussion instruments. Michelle Dent created dance movements based on Ancient Egyptian hieroglyphs and art work. The ideas the children developed were used within their explanation writing. Finally Bob Tonks worked in school for four days (21<sup>st</sup> to 24<sup>th</sup> of April) creating willow sculptures based on new Egyptian gods/goddesses. The sculptures were then used as a stimulus for poetry writing.

### **Participating pupils**

Due to teacher assessment and analysis of school data year 4 was selected as the group to be involved in the Star Initiative. Within the two year 4 classes two target groups consisting of 6 boys (per group) were selected. The selection was made based on their underperformance within writing, partly due to their lack of motivation and reluctance to write.

### **Action research employed - year group and target group for testing**

In late November 2007 (after consultation with my year 4 colleague) two target groups were selected. Through the course of an afternoon I interviewed each boy individually using a series of questions to obtain an idea of their attitude to and perception of writing. The boys were then interviewed again (using the same questions) at the beginning of the June, when the project ended (see page 13.)

### **Involvement of school staff members**

The staff involved in the project included myself, Jane Garnett acting as literacy subject leader, year 4 class teacher and Star co-ordinator, Gareth May, the Deputy Head teacher and Jemma English, a year 4 teacher. The majority of the planning and teaching was undertaken by Jemma and me. However two sessions based on the story of Osiris and Isis, were planned and taught by Jill Stubbs, teaching and learning consultant for primary literacy.

### **Management and co-ordination responsibilities**

Throughout the project ideas for planning were discussed as a year 4 team with the final lesson plans and resources produced by myself as part of my role as project co-ordinator and literacy subject leader. As a team we have always used speaking and listening within literacy lessons but I felt we needed to provide more opportunities to develop the children's planning skills. I did this by ensuring that we used the artist sessions to inspire and stimulate ideas which were then verbalised and developed through speaking, listening and drama activities. Within the planning I also included regular guided writing sessions using a variety of planning formats. This helped and encouraged pupils to develop and refine their ideas before writing. After the writing was assessed I collected pupil data in the form of tracking sheets. We analysed the data as a team and individual pupil targets were discussed and set to ensure pupils understood what they now needed to do to improve their writing.

### **Start and end dates**

Due to significant flood damage to the school building and its resources we felt it was not appropriate or possible to begin the Star initiative until January 2008. This was mainly due to the fact that the school hall was not fully refurbished until mid-December 2007 and many of the activities we had planned involved using this space. The project therefore started on 15<sup>th</sup> January with Gary Hammond's first session and ended in mid June after completing work done with Bob Tonks in early May.

### **Performance to parents**

A performance to parents took place on the evening of the 12<sup>th</sup> June 2008. The written work created by the children was displayed around the hall as were the God and Goddess sculptures. Photographic evidence of the work performed by the children was also on display and visual recordings of the music sessions with Gary Hammond and the animation work were shown. Live performances were

included in the evening where groups of pupils performed their Egyptian dances, presented their sculptures and read out examples of their written work.

### **Monitoring and evaluation procedures**

Throughout the project every piece of writing produced by the children was assessed by both year four teachers using the Roz Wilson criterion assessment sheets. This data was recorded on tracking sheets which I collected and then analysed. My analysis focused on the progress of all the pupils taking part in the project but with a specific concentration on our target group of children. These assessments were discussed in regular planning meetings and we used the results to inform our planning for future sessions. Both Jemma and I also kept a notebook where we recorded any comments the children made, notes on our observations of artist sessions and any ideas for future writing opportunities. We also took lots of photographs, video footage and audio records through the use of talking books.

### **The Project.**

#### **How opportunities for writing were developed throughout the project.**

Due to the late start of our project we were limited to planning three units of writing. Our first narrative unit was linked to the primary framework for literacy unit Stories set in imaginary worlds. To introduce the theme of Ancient Egypt our project began with the children being given the task of researching via the internet, any information about the Ancient Egyptians gods Osiris, Seth and Isis. This knowledge was useful both as background information and as a way of setting the scene for the myth of 'Osiris and Isis'. The children were introduced to the opening of myth by the year 4 teachers. The plot and characters were then explored by Gary Hammond's first session where the children used world percussion instruments to add sound effects to the story. We deliberately left the story at a point where several plot avenues could be explored. This was where Jill Stubbs came in to work with pupils in developing and mapping a plan of the next stage in the story.

The objective at this point was to encourage the children to use the sounds and 'wow' words (adventurous adjectives and adverbs) they had generated with Gary and use the connective and punctuation pyramids to 'uplevel' or improve their sentence structure. It was evident even at this early stage that the work the children had done with Gary was having a significant impact on the children's imagination and their ability to form and use description in their writing. The next step involved Gary taking examples of children's writing which he amalgamated into one story. He gave the children feedback regarding their ideas and use of vocabulary and their ideas were then used to develop a soundtrack for the story. Jill followed this session by checking the progress of the children's writing so far and helping them to plan and write exciting endings by concentrating particularly on sentence openers. The children were asked to copy and illustrate their finished stories and then given the opportunity to read and enjoy one another's work.

The next piece of work was based on the non-narrative unit explanation texts. We decided to focus our work on the Ancient Egyptian ritual of mummification as we felt the gory nature of the subject would appeal to our target group of children. To set the scene for our writing the children watched a powerpoint presentation and a BBC History DVD that visually explained the process of mummification. Next pupils took part in an educational visit to the hands on history museum in Hull. Part of the day involved the children watching a simulated mummification, with the mummy in question being a class mate! This was both highly educational and entertaining for all concerned. Finally, the pupils took part in two dance sessions led by Michelle Dent where the children used actions and movements from the mummification process within their dancing.

Throughout all these activities the children were asked to make notes, diagrams etc in their star books to use as a basis for a plan of their explanation text. Before beginning their skeleton plan, pupils were asked to role play the mummification process with a partner and it was astounding to see that all pupils could accurately act out each step in the correct order. The objectives both during the planning and the final piece of writing were to use technical vocabulary, time connectives and paragraphing. It was clear that the use of drama, speaking and listening and audio/visual resources had helped to embed the knowledge the children required to write a successful explanation text. By also delaying the writing process by providing lots of practical activities, the children were eager to begin their work and bursting with ideas for their writing.

The final piece of writing was poetry and based on the unit exploring form. Bob Tonks worked with each year 4 class for two days. On the first day, Bob asked the children to tell him what they already knew about Egyptian gods and goddesses including names and what the gods represented. He then told the children to imagine they were Egyptologists who had discovered a new god. He explained that the god was hidden in the desert and it was our job to help the god emerge by creating it out of willow. At first the children found this rather daunting but as the day progressed the idea of the sculpture taking the lead and actually 'talking' to them became clear.

Pupils were put into groups of three and shown how to make circles of various sizes from the willow. The circles were then attached to willow rods to create a skeleton frame. As the willow was flexible yet strong it actually took on a life of its own which created some weird and wonderful shapes! At this point, the children were asked to note down ideas in their star books on the name and role of their god/goddess. Quite early on in the session (without being prompted) most groups had already given their gods some highly imaginative names and roles. This clearly showed their high level of interest and enthusiasm for the activity. The children's ideas then influenced the choice of colours and textures they used to create the sculpture's tissue paper skin.

Throughout the two days the pupils were asked to keep a record of their sculpture through the use of small, detailed sketches. Their drawings helped the children decide how they would show the god's personality through the use of

colour, texture and facial details. Indeed it was at this point on the second day when Bob asked the children to add such details to their sculptures that the sculptures really came to life and the children were clearly thrilled with their end results. The sculptures were hung from the classroom ceiling so they could be displayed from all angles for all to see.

During the next week, we used the sculptures as a stimulus for poetry writing. Firstly the pupils looked at examples of different forms of poetry, studying the structure, rhyming scheme and use of figurative and expressive language. We particularly focused on Haiku and Cinquain poetry as the similarity of using a syllable structure appealed to the children and we decided to write Haiku and Cinquain poems about our gods/goddess sculptures. We began the writing process by sitting around the sculptures and writing down a bank of 'wow' words about the personality, appearance, role and movements of our god. As the children knew their god literally inside and out, they easily came up with a large selection of powerful verbs, adventurous adjectives and clever adverbs. Pupils were also encouraged to use a thesaurus to 'up-level' their 'wow' words to help ensure the children's vocabulary was extended as much as possible.

In the next couple of sessions, the children were asked to write Haiku and Cinquain poems using their 'wow' word bank. The children were constantly encouraged to count syllables, ensuring the poem's set structure was followed correctly. They were also asked to review and improve their poems using the VCOP system and writing partners were used to evaluate each others work using the 'three stars and a wish' method. Finally the children were asked to present their poetry neatly either by writing or by using ICT. Most of the poems were proudly displayed around the school, with the rest compiled as an anthology.

### **Project Evaluation.**

#### **Critical review of the project and opportunity to celebrate successes and achievements**

##### **Whole school development**

Our school long term plan has been developed and adapted to have a much more thematic approach to the curriculum and we have tried to create cross curricular links as much as possible to make sure learning is meaningful and has a purpose and to try to solve timetable problems of an ever expanding curriculum. Taking part in the Star Initiative has helped my role as literacy subject leader as it has provided me with valuable experiences and evidence that suggests a more flexible approach to the curriculum is the way forward in the teaching of writing. By using the creative arts to make cross curricular links we found that it helped to not only motivate and inspire the children but allowed opportunities for more flexibility in regards to planning and the approaches to teaching and learning.

### **Staff development/CPD**

As literacy subject leader I was responsible for training and leading CPD sessions on the implementation of the new primary framework for literacy. As the Star Initiative's creative approach to literacy mirrors the principles of the new primary framework, I was eager to co-ordinate and take part in the project so that I could practically experience new approaches to the teaching and learning of writing and thus develop my own subject knowledge and expertise. A CPD session is planned for all staff to share our experiences of the project and show successful examples of the more creative approach to writing. The project has also allowed regular opportunities for both joint planning sessions and the shared analysis of pupil tracking data. This has led to a more team led approach to assessment for learning and pupil target setting.

### **Approaches to teaching and learning**

The Star Initiative has had two main influences on the teaching and learning within Year 4. The first influence is the idea of giving the children much more time to develop and plan their ideas before actually starting the writing process. By allowing more time for pupils to develop their thoughts, the children are literally bursting with ideas making them much more eager and enthusiastic about putting pen to paper. The second influence was the flexibility and freedom the project gave to both staff and pupils. Due to the open-ended nature of the project, staff had the opportunity to use a much more pupil-led approach to planning. This meant that assessment for learning opportunities became an integral part of every session. As there was no set time scale within the planning, pupils had the opportunity to spend much longer planning, developing and improving their writing. By spending longer proof-reading and evaluating their work, the pupils began to realise what was needed to improve their writing and some children even liked the idea of developing their own target cards based on their observations.

### **Literacy (Writing focus)**

As a school we wanted to promote the Star Initiative as an exciting opportunity and therefore wanted the children to have ownership of the project from the outset. We informed the children about the final exhibition of their work both at the Beverly Minister and at our school presentation evening. This gave the project a real purpose and motivated children to produce their best work in order that it would be selected for the exhibitions. At the start of the project pupils were given a 'Star book'. This was a spiral bound hard back book that contained alternate pages of lined A4 writing paper and high quality plain cartridge paper. The pupils were presented with the book with the understanding that it was their own personal book for the duration of the project.

The children used the books to record ideas or thoughts, draw pictures or diagrams, stick information they had researched and downloaded from the internet, write diary entries about the artist sessions and plan pieces of writing

based on these experiences. The pupils were told that the books would be looked at by the year 4 teachers but would not be 'officially' marked as we wanted the children to see the book as a work in progress and have the freedom and creativity to develop their ideas without the worry of formal assessment though marking. The children took great pride in their star books and it was noted that some children who were previously reluctant to write in their Literacy books produced a much great quantity of written work in their star books.

### **Cross-curricular aspects**

Throughout the project, many cross-curricular links were made including history, music, art, PE and ICT. 50% of curriculum time was taken up with the Star Initiative in the weeks prior to, during and after an artist residency.

### **Arts Development**

Due to our work with the various artists, pupil perceptions of how the creative arts are linked have altered greatly as many children now realise how sounds and images from music and art can inspire and influence their written work. In particular the work the children did with Gary Hammond really developed their musical abilities to identify rhythm, tone and pitch through the use of unusual and sometimes challenging instruments!

### **Working with artists and performers**

Both the children and staff who were involved with working with the artists were excited and greatly inspired by their work. All the artists were extremely helpful with regards to meeting the needs of our objectives and the needs of the children. We were able to plan and discuss with the artists how the sessions would build into the children's writing and enable them to make the necessary steps to improve the writing. Their skill and expertise allowed the children to participate and take part in activities that motivated and stimulated their imaginations. The ideas the children generated from the artist sessions were used as a foundation for their all their writing throughout the project.

### **Networking and the wider community**

Parents were informed about our participation in the Star Initiative through our 'Information for Parents' newsletter. The activities and artist residencies were explained in the newsletter so that parents understood the aims and reasons for our involvement. Parents of the pupils within our target group were also given more specific details during the formal parent/teacher interviews that took place in March 2008. This included information on the success of the project in regards to pupil progress up to the time of the parent interviews.



## Other Issues for Evaluation Report

**Contact details of artists used with recommendations for future projects in schools**

Gary Hammond - Percussionist

Jill Stubbs - Teaching and Learning consultant, Primary Literacy

Michelle Dent - East Riding 'Coaches into school'

Bob Tonks - Sculptor

## Outcomes of Action Research

### Year 4 JG Class Assessed Writing Results (pink indicates the target group)

Pupils	Teacher Assessments Sept 07	Teacher Assessments Oct 07	Teacher Assessments Feb 08	Teacher Assessments Apr 08	Teacher Assessments May 08
1	3b	3b	3a	4b	4b
2	2b	2c	2b	2c	2b
3	2c	2c	2c	2b	2b
4	2a	2a	3c	3b	3b
5	Absent	2a	2a	3b	3a
6	3b	3c	3c	4c	4c
7	<2	1a	2c	1a	1a
8	2b	2c	2b	2b	2b
9	2c	1a	2c	2c	2b
10	3b	3c	3c	3b	3c
11	2b	2c	2b	3c	3c
12	Absent	Absent	Absent	Absent	3b
13	W	W	W	1c	1b
14	3b	3a	3a	4b	4b
15	3c	2a	2b	3b	3a
16	3b	3b	3a	4a	4a
17	2a	2b	2a	AB	3c
18	2b	2b	2c	2a	2a
19	2b	2b	2b	3c	3b
20	2a	3c	2a	4c	4c
21	Absent	3a	3a	4c	4b
22	3b	3b	2a	4b	4b
23	2c	2c	1a	2b	2b
24	3c	3b	3c	3a	3a
25	2a	2a	2c	3b	3b
26	2a	2a	2a	2a	3b
27	W	W	1c	1c	1b
28	2b	2a	3c	3b	3a
29	2b	2a	3c	3c	3c

## Outcomes of Action Research

### Year 4 JE Class Assessed Writing Results (pink indicates the target group)

Pupils	Teacher Assessments Sept 07	Teacher Assessments Oct 07	Teacher Assessments Feb 08	Teacher Assessments Apr 08	Teacher Assessments May 08
1	<2	1c	<1c	<1c	<2
2	4c	3b	4b	4a	4a
3	3b	2a	3b	3c	3c
4	3c	3c	3b	3b	3a
5	Absent	Absent	4b	4b	4a
6	<2	1b	1a	1a	1a
7	2b	3b	3b	3b	3a
8	2c	2b	2b	2b	2a
9	2b	2b	3c	3c	3c
10	3c	2a	3c	3c	3b
11	4c	3a	4c	4c	4b
12	2a	2b	3b	3b	3a
13	2b	2c	2a	2a	3c
14	3c	2a	2b	3a	4c
15	2c	2c	2b	2b	2a
16	3c	3b	3b	3a	4c
17	2c	3c	3b	3a	4c
18	2b	2c	2b	2b	2a
19	2a	2c	2b	3c	3b
20	3c	3c	3c	3b	3a
21	3b	4b	4a	4b	4a
22	2c	1c	1b	1a	2b
23	4c	3a	4c	4b	4a
24	<2	2c	2c	2c	2b
25	2a	2b	3a	3a	3b
26	3b	3b	3b	3b	3a
27	2a	3c	3c	3c	3b
28	2a	2a	3c	3c	3b
29	2a	3c	3c	3b	3b

### Conclusions from results analysis

Our initial aim was to improve writing in year 4 with a particular focus on two target groups of underachieving boys. What we have clearly seen from our teacher assessment is that the Star Initiative has not only helped to raise attainment for our target groups but for all pupils in Year 4. Some of the children in our target groups have not only increased their attainment (by as much as 3 sub-levels in some cases) but they also have marked improvements in their attitudes towards writing. Another group of children who have responded extremely well to the project are our SEN children. We have seen children who find all aspects of Literacy extremely challenging improve their writing by 2 sub-levels. We feel these improvements are due to two things. Firstly having the ability to be flexible in both our planning and our approaches to teaching enabled

us to use assessment for learning much more effectively, allowing us to adapt our lessons to the specific needs of the pupils. We also found the cross-curricular nature of the Star initiative helped to create links with other areas of the curriculum including the creative arts. This meant the children's discussions were stimulated and the flow of ideas became easier. Developing and structuring ideas was an area a lot of our SEN children found difficult but by embedding practical activities as well as speaking, listening and drama into our lessons the children had more opportunities to improve these skills which in turn fed into their writing.

### **Implications for future provision in school**

The methodology of creating links with literacy and other areas of the curriculum will be continued within year 4, hopefully extending out to other year groups through the use of CPD sessions. As a whole school we will continue to invite visitors and experts to work with the children to further stimulate their ideas and imaginations within their writing. The use of speaking, listening and drama will also feature heavily within planning as we have seen through the project how enjoyable, successful and inspiring such activities are for the children. We will also continue to include ICT within our Literacy lessons indeed money has already been spent to buy in software such as a more sophisticated movie/animation programme and hardware such as sturdy digital cameras that take both still and moving images.

### **The legacy**

The Star Initiative has had a positive impact on writing this year and will continue to do so in the future by sharing the methodology of the Star approach throughout the school. The children's attitudes towards writing have become much more positive due to the increase in speaking, listening and drama activities. We will continue to include such activities particularly before the point of writing as we have found this makes lessons more interactive and stimulates the children's imaginations to the point that they are literally bursting with ideas to write about. We also aim to continue using a much more flexible approach to teaching and learning which fits in well with our school focus on developing our inclusion of more assessment for learning opportunities within lessons. We feel this has made a significant difference to our teaching and learning and accounts for the improvements in the children's writing as our lessons have had much more focus on the specific needs of the children.

## Perceptions

### **Perceptions of pupils**

Before the start of the Star Initiative I individually interviewed each of the children within our target group. I did this to measure their perceptions and attitudes towards writing. These were just a few of the comments children made:

"I find it hard and it takes too long. I don't like doing it everyday." (E, age 8)

"I think it's tricky to think of things to write... I don't have enough time to think." (M, age 8)

"I like writing stories but only about Dr Who." (J, age 8)

"My handwriting is messy and sometimes my hand hurts." (S, age 8)

When I questioned the same children at the end of the project the difference in their perceptions about writing was astonishing:

"Writing is really fun especially stories." (M, age 9)

"I like doing drama and pretending to be my character. This has helped me with my speech marks." (E, age 9)

"I am much better at thinking of ideas now because I use a mind-map to plan my ideas." (M, age 9)

"We have longer to write now and I like having my Star book because I can write what I want and do pictures too." (S, age 9)

As a whole year group the project has been perceived as fun, motivational and inspiring. Both staff and pupils were eager to take part in all the activities and we have seen really positive outcomes for all involved.

### **Perceptions of parents**

Parents have remarked how enthusiastic the children have been about the Star initiative and have talked at length to them about the activities and artists they have worked with. Parents also commented on the improvements in the children's writing and gave extremely positive feedback at our Star evening which was extremely well attended.

### **Perceptions of artists**

All the artists that visited our school commented on the enthusiasm and excitement the children had for their work. Bob Tonks said "They are a great bunch of kids, who are eager to learn and to share their ideas about their work." Jill Stubbs said "The development of the children's ideas and vocabulary has been noticeably significant since my last session, which shows they have clearly developed their ideas for their writing in Gary's (Gary Hammond) sessions."

### **Headteacher's perceptions**

From reading this report, listening to staff talk about the project, looking at the excellent work which the children have done and attending the evening event, it is clear that this project has been a resounding success.

Not only does the assessment and anecdotal evidence show development in writing skills, it also shows an improvement in the perception of writing and the children's own self-image as writers, both of which are really important for ongoing development.

The project built well on the school's commitment to provide an enriched, enjoyable curriculum through visits and visitors, as well as the cross-curricular approaches which we consistently promote. In doing so the project again has proved the value of these approaches and has provided a further impetus for such work in the future.

*Signed:*

*STAR Initiative Co-ordinator 2007/08*