



CASE STUDY REPORT

Essex LA Strategy Support Teacher: Using mentoring/coaching to improve practice and attainment

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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 support a Year 4 teacher in raising attainment in writing in her class by using features of Assessment For Learning, The National Strategy and other resources.

Aims: The main aim was to use Assessment For Learning, The National Strategy and other resources to raise attainment in writing for a focus group of Year 4 pupils.

Methods: The participants in this case study are a Year 4 teacher, a focus group of pupils, a Strategy Support Teacher, a LA curriculum adviser, and Shirley Clarke (AFL). Methods used included AfL features such as success criteria, self and peer marking, mini-plenaries, National Strategy Units of work, Progression papers, Expanded Process of Writing, APP grids, displays, and mentoring/coaching.

Findings: The main findings are that the use of AfL techniques, National Strategy materials, and mentoring/coaching approaches have led to improved writing levels in the focus group, increased staff awareness, and improved teaching and learning.

Implications: The findings suggest that providing teachers with time to discuss teaching and learning, as well as access to CPD resources, can lead to improved teaching and learning outcomes for pupils. Additionally, the use of AfL techniques and National Strategy materials can help pupils make progress in their writing.

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

Keywords: Primary education; English - writing

Introduction

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

As an SST I had been asked to support a Year 4 teacher with raising attainment in writing in her class. There has been no progress since the end of Key Stage 1 and end of Year 3 in the writing of the focus group of pupils. The pupils were chosen by the class teacher because of lack of progress. When I met the group they said they liked writing but found it hard.

Who might find this case study useful?

- Teacher

Description

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

- English - writing

How did you intend to impact on pupil learning?

By using features of Assessment For Learning, The National Strategy and other resources within planning, the pupils would make greater improvement in their writing. AfL features would include regular high quality use of success criteria, self and peer marking and mini plenaries. The National Strategy Units of work, Progression papers and Expanded Process of Writing would be used in planning to ensure sequential lessons towards a known output. More non adult support of a varying kind would be available to the underachieving pupils. Using APP the pupils levels of writing would be assessed and next step targets set.

What were your success criteria?

Increased staff awareness of materials available on the National Strategy and use of for planning. Greater use of all features of AFL within planning to increase progress of pupils. More use of non adult support within the classroom to aid independent learning.

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

- Periodic teacher assessment

Describe the CPD approaches you used

I worked alongside a Year 4 teacher to plan units of work from the National Strategy. Additional materials were looked at too, including Progression Papers eg. recount or report etc. This was useful to look at along with the Year group before to ensure no steps in learning were left out for under achievers. Phases 1, 2 and 3 of a unit of work were incorporated into planning, making sure the pupils had a thorough immersion and reading experiences, before carrying out any writing task.

AfL techniques such as self and peer marking, mini-plenaries and success criteria were planned for too. We looked at a focus group to see what level they were writing at and next steps. APP grids were shaded, based on a range of pupils' writing to see where gaps were individually and as a group. Visits to the Strategy Support Teachers classroom were arranged for observation of practice, focus of which was discussed in meetings. Pupil aids for writing were to be displayed, eg. connectives, punctuation and to be made available at pupils' desks and class teacher to find or write good quality texts so pupils know what they need to be aiming for. Discussions between the focus group and the SST were to take place on each visit to discuss their learning, including what would help them learn. High expectations were to be set according to the ability of each group.

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

Experience of working with Shirley Clarke (Afl) and Essex's Afl toolkit were drawn on to promote Afl techniques. The National Strategy Units of work were looked at thoroughly including each phase to plan for progression and use of good quality resources. The Progression of Text Types were used to look above and below (Year3/5) for next steps in the appropriate genres in this case Narrative Unit 1 & 4 and Non-Fiction Unit 2 & 4.

- Essex AFL Toolkit, Essex Literacy CPD Team
- Shirley Clarke, Formative Assessment
- The Expanded Process of Writing, Eve Bearne UKLA
- Assessment for learning throughout a teaching sequence, primary framework for literacy and mathematics

SST researched material available on the internet for further resources and also examples of own school pupils writing to use for comparison of quality success criteria.

Who provided you with support?

- Other

How were you supported?

I had a link with a LA curriculum adviser for my area who read and checked my visit notes.

Impact

What has been the overall impact on pupil learning?

The writing levels of most of the target pupils have improved. One pupil has made 4 sub level progress ie. 1 level and 1 sublevel, 2a > 3b. One pupil has made 2 sub levels progress 2a > 3b. Two pupils have made 1 sub level progress, 2c > 2b. Finally one pupil has stayed at the same writing level. The pupils that have made less progress are boys who find the physical task of writing difficult. Their ideas for writing are good and when using a word processor the quality of their writing improves.

In addition the pupils have become more independent learners due to displays around the classroom. Pupils are confidently using AfL features such as success criteria, talk partners, self and peer assessment. Pupils are keen to discuss their learning, saying what helps them and what would be better for them.

Thoughts you think are relevant to overall impact on learning

By focusing on a target group, it was possible to see where their gaps of learning were and then provide appropriate opportunities to accelerate learning. By using mentoring and lesson study approaches, teaching and learning were discussed to allow for scaffolded learning alongside independent learning. Through the use of AfL materials and National Strategy materials, planning has been developed to provide for all learners. By using Phase 1, 2, and 3 from the Strategy Units of work, planning allowed the pupils to follow the 'Expanded Process Of Writing'. This in turn led to an improvement in writing.

Quotes you think are relevant to overall impact on learning

'When talking to the focus group, they revealed lots of information on what helped them learn.' (SST)

'I like success criteria. They remind us what to do. I wish we had them on our tables' 'The working wall and displays help me when I am writing.' 'Finding out lots of information and watching a DVD helped me with my

writing. 'I like checking my writing with a partner as they can help me.' (Pupils)

Quantitative evidence of impact on pupil learning

- Periodic teacher assessment

Qualitative evidence of impact on pupil learning

- Observation outcomes
- Pupils' work

Describe the evidence of impact on pupil learning

APP (Assessing Pupil Progress) was used with data collected at points during the year. The pupil progress data shows improvement in performance. In the underachieving focus group, 4 out of 5 pupils have made 2 star progress over the school year. (It is expected they will achieve one level's progress in two years.) Qualitative evidence is present in visit notes from SST. Displays on Rainforest show improvement in sentence structure and use of persuasive language.

What has been the impact on teaching?

Partner teacher has said her practice has improved as a result of the coaching/mentoring programme. The partner teacher felt the programme had allowed her to step back and look at the ability of her class and the focus group, which she had not been able to do before. This thinking time has given her the opportunity to share her practice with the SST and observe the SST teaching in areas she felt would benefit her teaching. Time to look at the Strategy materials and AfL materials and discuss them has proved very beneficial. The discussion that the SST had with the focus group revealed useful information on their learning. Information they may not have felt happy to share with their own teacher

Quotes you think are relevant to the impact on teaching

'The knowledge I have gained as a Leading Literacy Teacher has been shared with another teacher and I have seen a positive impact on her confidence and the pupils within the focus group. On an informal extra visit to the school, individuals within the focus group were pleased to see me and wanted to know if we were going to get together as a group again.' (SST)

Evidence of impact on teaching

- Evidence from planning

Describe the evidence of impact on teaching

Planning shows a thorough use of AfL features and the 'Expanded Process Of Writing'. Specific teaching strategies which have now been developed are evident in planning. eg. Supported composition as prior writing before independent, more specific success criteria, self and peer marking. (see 6th visit note on What page)

What has been the impact on school organisation and leadership?

Impact to be shown in the future.

Evidence of impact on school organisation and leadership

Impact to be shown in the future.

Summary

What is the crucial thing that made the difference?

The crucial thing that made a difference to the teaching and learning of the whole class I supported was allowing the class teacher to stand back from her pupils, spending quality time discussing the teaching and learning within her classroom. Good practice was already taking place, but with the use of additional CPD resources and time to discuss the best way to promote learning in a coaching/mentoring way the teaching and learning was given a boost. The pupils enjoyed the focus given to them and both Partner Teacher and SST Teacher gained in their own professional development.

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

Lesson study materials
APP materials
National Strategy Units of Work
Progression In Text Types (National Strategy)
Afl Toolkit (Essex)
Books on Afl by Shirley Clarke.

What CPD session and resources were particularly useful?

Initial day's training for SST
Timeline for Strategy Support Programme
Moderation Meetings at intervals
Suggestions for improvements on 1st visit note from link Curriculum Adviser
Link with designated curriculum Adviser throughout programme by e.mail

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

Be familiar with National Strategy Materials and AfL Materials.
Allow time to form a relationship between Partner Teacher and SST before SST becomes a critical friend.

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

Taking part in ECaW (Every Child A Writer) September 2010, following a similar timeline, but working alongside 2 other schools and my own, with 6 teachers in all, to raise attainment in writing in Year 3 and 4.

Supplementary Materials

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

- 1st Visit to partner school note
- 2nd Visit to partner school note
- 3rd Visit to partner school note
- 4th Visit to partner school note
- 5th Visit to partner school note
- 6th Visit to partner school note
- Pupil 3 Writing sample - Information Feb 10
- Pupil 3 Writing sample - Story May 10
- Pupil 3 Writing sample - Story Sept 09
- Pupil 6 Writing sample - Information Feb 10
- Pupil 6 Writing sample - Story May 10
- Pupil Progress data
- Pupil 4 Writing sample - Story Sept 09

- Pupil 4 Writing sample - Information Feb 10
- Rainforest display

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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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