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Layered targets: Steps to success

Author	Hawes, Andy
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CASE STUDY REPORT

Layered targets: Steps to success

Andy Hawes

This study was originally published in 2009 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 identify why children were not achieving their targets in English and mathematics, and to develop CPD approaches to help teachers create success steps for targets and increase the number of pupils achieving them.

Aims: The main aim was to increase the number of pupils achieving their targets, especially age-related ones, by helping teachers identify pupils' prior learning and create appropriate 'learning journeys' towards the target.

Methods: Participants included head of school improvement, headteacher, middle leader, national strategies consultant, SIP, subject leader, and teacher. They were supported by local authority staff and primary strategy consultants.

Methods used included consultants working with teachers to identify pupils' starting points and 'next steps', modelling the process so teachers can implement it, and learning conversations with pupils to ensure they understand how they are working towards their targets.

Findings: The main findings are that teachers have a better understanding of how to plan teaching towards targets, pupils can talk about their learning journey and there is a slight increase in the number of pupils achieving their targets.

Implications: The findings suggest that teachers need to identify pupils' prior learning and create a 'learning journey' towards the target. This will help pupils understand their targets and increase the number of pupils achieving them, especially age-related ones.

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; Mathematics

Introduction

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

Monitoring of the first year of the Intensifying Support Programme (ISP) showed that, while schools could really appreciate the benefit of the layered curricular targets in English and mathematics, children were still not necessarily achieving them. When we explored this further, we discovered that many teachers were not really identifying children's prior learning or starting points and were just aiming their teaching at the target statement for the entire half-term, rather than building an appropriate 'learning journey' towards the target. We also discovered that children often did not understand what the targets meant in terms of their own learning.

Who might find this case study useful?

- Head of school improvement
- Headteacher
- Middle leader
- National Strategies consultant
- SIP (School Improvement Partner)
- Subject leader
- Teacher

Description

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

- English - writing
- Mathematics

How did you intend to impact on pupil learning?

We hoped that the number of children achieving their targets would increase, in particular, the number of children achieving the age-related or above age-related targets.

What were your success criteria?

That pupils could talk about the 'learning journey' to their target, explaining where they were at the start, where they were heading to and what step they were currently working on at the time of the discussion.

That each class showed an increase in the number of pupils achieving their targets, especially age-related ones.

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

- Learning walks / study visits
- Logs or interviews
- Periodic teacher assessment

Describe the CPD approaches you used

Teachers met in pairs or threes with a consultant, across mixed year groups to actually create success steps for targets, having been shown a model of what an example might look like.

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

Resources are contained in the zip file below. (ReadMe doc; New layered targets for Numeracy; Division targets Y1-Y6; Multiplication targets Y1-Y6; Subtraction targets Y1-Y6; Literacy targets Y1-Y6)

Relevant National Strategies resources:

Who provided you with support?

- Local authority staff
- Middle leader
- Subject leader

How were you supported?

Primary Strategy Consultants working with teachers.

Impact

What has been the overall impact on pupil learning?

- Interviewed pupils were able to talk about their targets and their learning much more successfully.
- In some classes, there was a slight increase in the number of pupils achieving the targets.

Quantitative evidence of impact on pupil learning

- Periodic teacher assessment

Qualitative evidence of impact on pupil learning

- Logs or interviews

Describe the evidence of impact on pupil learning

See above.

What has been the impact on teaching?

- Teachers have a far greater understanding of how the learning builds within the target statements.
- Teachers start their teaching by identifying where pupils' starting points are on the 'success-steps continuum' and plan their teaching programme so that pupils progress through the steps towards the targets.
- Teachers' assessment has improved, because they can use the steps to inform their judgements about progress.

Quotes you think are relevant to the impact on teaching

I never taught Guided reading properly before. I just used to get a book and ask a few questions as they read it. Now, I know exactly which step each group is working on and what they have to do next. It's made me focus my teaching and the children are making much better progress. (Year 1 teacher)

Evidence of impact on teaching

- Evidence from observation and monitoring

Describe the evidence of impact on teaching

Evidence gained through observation of lessons and discussions with teachers in a range of schools.

What has been the impact on school organisation and leadership?

Schools who did the development work with us have set the expectation that all staff will follow the guidance and display appropriate success-steps with the targets from September 2006.

Monitoring now includes pupil interviews based on the learning associated with the target success-steps, rather than just 'tell me what your target is.'

Evidence of impact on school organisation and leadership

Evidence from participating schools, changes to practice.

Summary

What is the crucial thing that made the difference?

Consultants working with teachers to identify pupils' starting points and 'next steps' and plan teaching towards the targets, modelling the process so teachers can successfully implement it for themselves across all their teaching.

What CPD session and resources were particularly useful?

Consultants' working sessions with teachers.

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

- Choose one area and focus on identification of pupils' starting points and next steps, using the Layered Targets resources (What page).
- Essential elements: a focus on pupils' learning with teaching based on the success-steps. Learning conversations with pupils to ensure they understand how they are working towards their targets.

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

We are planning to support more schools to create success-steps for the 'stock' layered targets that they are using, with a view to them eventually creating their own targets to suit their unique needs.

As part of an ISP hub, we are aiming to create model reading targets with success-steps identified.

Supplementary Materials

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

- Layered Targets Resources - zipfile

About Camtree

Camtree: the Cambridge Teacher Research Exchange is a global platform for close-to-practice research in education. Based at Hughes Hall, University of Cambridge, Camtree draws on high-quality research from around the world to support educators to reflect on their practice and carry out inquiries to improve learning in their own classrooms and organisations. You can find out more about Camtree and its digital library at www.camtree.org.

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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