



## CASE STUDY REPORT

# Every Child a Writer: Effective collaboration with a leading teacher

Lorette Elsmore

*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 improve the teaching and learning of writing by developing planning and classroom practice, using CPD approaches, resources, and support from a Lead Teacher.

**Aims:** The main aim of this development work was to improve the teaching and learning of writing, focusing on composition, through developing children's understanding and responsibility for their own learning.

**Methods:** The participants in this case study were two teachers, a Leading Teacher, local authority staff, senior management, and pupils. They worked together to improve the teaching and learning of writing. Methods used included attending regional training seminars, attending local cluster meetings, using APP, Support for Writing, Planning Circles/phases materials, using Talk for Writing DVD, using picture books, and working with a Lead Teacher.

**Findings:** The main findings of this case study are that the collaborative approach of a leading teacher, combined with high quality texts, cluster meetings, and Talk for Writing materials, has resulted in improved quality and quantity of pupils' writing, increased enjoyment of English, and improved teaching quality.

**Implications:** The findings of this case study suggest that collaborative approaches to teaching and learning, such as the Every Child a Writer program, can have a positive impact on pupil learning, teaching, and school organization and leadership. High quality texts, dedicated writing tables, and working walls are essential elements for successful implementation.

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

**Keywords:** Primary education; Assessment and target setting; English - writing

## Introduction

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

To develop our planning and classroom practice in the teaching and learning of writing.

### Who might find this case study useful?

- Teacher

## Description

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

- Assessment and target setting
- English - writing

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

We intended to have impact on writing, focusing on composition as evidence locally and nationally showed that this was an area of weakness, through

- developing children's understanding and responsibility for their own learning;
- building partnerships between teacher and pupils to inform target setting; and
- using assessment for learning to identify gaps in children's learning which could be met through focused guided work.

### What were your success criteria?

To work towards the principles of ECaW, which are:-

- improving quality of first teaching (whole class);
- improving guided writing to meet group needs; and
- one to one intervention.

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

- Observation outcomes
- Periodic teacher assessment
- Pupil consultation data

## Describe the CPD approaches you used

We were part of the Every Child a Writer programme in Medway led by Ruth Wells. We worked with and discussed our practice with our Leading teacher Amanda Grenfell who acted as our Writing Partner; she provided in-class coaching and review meetings which were used to develop our practice further. Our first meeting with the Writing Partner was used to review current practice, formulate an action plan and set targets for the next meeting. Subsequent meetings involved shared planning and team teaching. In total we received 5.5 days support which included twilight cluster meetings where we were able to share good practice with colleagues from other schools. During these meetings our Writing Partner shared quality texts with us and teaching ideas with a particular focus on guided writing.

With the support of our Lead Teacher, we were able to dedicate time to exploring and understanding the different phases within the Primary Framework.

During our first cluster meeting, our Lead Teacher gave us the opportunity to look at a variety of high quality

texts which she recommended for use in phase one of each unit. This gave us the chance to build up our knowledge of appropriate authors for our Key Stage. She also introduced us to the concept of using picture books which was something we had not previously considered.

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

We attended regional training seminars run by the National Strategies which gave us an overview of ECaW. We attended local cluster meetings with other teachers who were delivering ECaW within the LEA. We used APP, Support for Writing, Planning Circles / phases materials from the Primary Framework. This was used together with the Talk for Writing DVD which gave us ideas to stimulate discussion before, during and after writing. Initially this was introduced during guided writing.

### Who provided you with support?

- Leading teacher
- Local authority staff
- Senior management

### How were you supported?

We were given the opportunity to work with a Lead Teacher who was an experienced teacher from a local school. Our Head Teacher supported the project and provided funding for new texts which could be used in Literacy lessons.

## Impact

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

The impact on teacher and pupil enjoyment of English has been immense, as a result of greater engagement with the texts. The quality and quantity of children's writing, both in literacy and across the curriculum, has improved and they now want to write regularly and are keen to make progress.

Although the children were not formally interviewed at the end of the year, children's enthusiasm and progression was seen to increase during the guided writing sessions – they were always keen to be chosen for the guided group.

Through using picture books and the Talk for Writing ideas, pupils can now re-tell stories in their own words using adventurous vocabulary aided by the picture prompts. In turn, children have used the structures and vocabulary from the stimuli in their writing. This type of book also allows pupils to build up a bank of stories for the genre and act as a discussion point.

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

'It's a good thing, gets things sorted' (Year 3 boy talking about the Guided Writing table)

### Quantitative evidence of impact on pupil learning

- Periodic teacher assessment

### Qualitative evidence of impact on pupil learning

- Observation outcomes
- Pupil consultation data
- Pupils' work

## Describe the evidence of impact on pupil learning

Evidence from pupils' discussions was an increase in enjoyment in writing – of all pupils, irrespective of gender or ability. The highlights of a Y4 work scrutiny were Pip's diaries (from Great Expectations)...impressive!

### Reading

- Y3 - 61% of pupils made 2+ sub-levels progress, with 39% making 3+ sub-levels progress.
- Y4 - 82% of pupils made 2+ sub-levels progress, with 19% making 3 sub-levels progress.

### Writing

- Y3 - 65% of pupils made 2+ sub-levels progress, with 27% making 3 sub-levels progress
- Y4 - 93% of pupils made 2+ sub-levels progress, with 26% making 3 sub-levels progress.

Feedback from parents of pupils who received one to one tuition was positive and they were grateful for their child to receive this opportunity.

Our Leading Teacher noted that learning was often happening discretely rather than solely through formal lessons (eg punctuation in Year 3). She also identified that AfL was being used continuously to inform teaching.

## What has been the impact on teaching?

We both feel that we are now familiar with the planning phases and are able to plan effectively using the Primary Framework. We are able to identify pupil's needs and address these through guided writing. Pre-ECaW we found our guided writing sessions were aimed at ensuring we worked with every child throughout the week and it would always be children of the same level working together. However, after our initial meeting with our Writing Partner we discussed the importance of identifying and targeting pupils' needs. This meant that different combinations of children worked together as part of the guided group. At times we may have worked with a child more than once a week to ensure that they grasped the concept/skill being taught. Having a dedicated table for guided writing helped to facilitate this and kept the children focused.

Through our knowledge of the phases we now have a better overall view of the unit which leads us and pupils on a learning journey with a specific outcome. Our increased knowledge of the phases in combination with the learning journey has given us greater ownership of our plans which makes for more enthusiastic delivery. This has made each unit of work much more focused and engaging for both us and our pupils.

## Evidence of impact on teaching

- Evidence from observation and monitoring
- Teacher perceptions

## Describe the evidence of impact on teaching

Lesson observations showed an improvement in our teaching. Quality of teaching improved for both teachers to consistently good with outstanding features, verified not only by senior leaders in school, but also in our recent Ofsted inspection.

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

The improvement in the quality of pupils' writing is as a direct result of the improvement in the quality of teaching of writing. All teachers are more inspired and flexible in their delivery, particularly in Y3 and Y4.

Lorette and Sarah will teach in Y5 and Y6 respectively next year, to disseminate best practice into upper KS2.

Two new teachers have been selected for Y3 and Y4 to ensure the momentum continues within lower KS2. (SMT)

## Evidence of impact on school organisation and leadership

Since delivering a whole school staff meeting in January, several colleagues across the key stages have begun to use working walls and the National Strategies site more frequently. A few have also created a dedicated writing area.

“The school has successfully improved the quality of teaching and learning in English and ensured that literacy is well promoted across the curriculum.” Ofsted May 2010.

## Summary

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

The collaborative approach of the leading teacher working with us over a period of time.

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

- Money to invest in high quality texts.
- Opportunity to visit and team teach with experienced and high quality practitioners of English.

### What CPD session and resources were particularly useful?

The cluster meetings run by our Lead Teacher helped us to make links with other teachers implementing the same initiative. We also found the Talk for Writing materials produced by Pie Corbett to be informative and useful.

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

- To find a Lead Teacher who has a good understanding and knowledge of the Primary Framework for Literacy and who can share best practice. To select a pair of teachers who can work collaboratively, have a positive approach and who are keen to improve their practice.
- Essential elements are talk partners, a dedicated writing table and a working wall.

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

We are both moving year groups and will look to transfer our practice into our new year groups and support our new colleagues to do the same. It is hoped that we will be able to cascade ECaW methods throughout the school.

## Supplementary Materials

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

- sample Pip diary.doc

## 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](http://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.

## Licence

This edited version of this case study is published by Camtree as a derivative work of the original under a Creative Commons Attribution Non-Commercial Licence (CC-BY-NC 4.0). The structured abstract that accompanies it was generated by Camtree in 2023 using the OpenAI GPT-3.5-Turbo Large Language Model.