



CASE STUDY REPORT

Using Lesson Study to improve standards in teaching and learning

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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 use the Lesson Study model to improve pedagogic technique and raise standards in writing, with a focus on Assessment for Learning Techniques and Support for Writing materials.

Aims: The main aim was to use the Lesson Study model to improve pedagogic technique and raise standards in writing, with a focus on Assessment for Learning techniques and Support for Writing materials.

Methods: The participants included headteachers, middle leaders, senior leadership teams, subject leaders, support staff, teachers, and Higher Level Teaching Assistants. The methods used included coaching, using the Lesson Study model, Assessment for Learning techniques, Support for Writing materials, and Learning Walks/Study Visits. Logs or interviews, periodic teacher assessment, and pupils' work were used to measure progress.

Findings: The main findings of this case study are that the use of the Lesson Study model and Assessment for Learning techniques improved pupil learning, teaching, and school organisation and leadership. It was found that good interpersonal skills, subject knowledge, and support from the Head teacher and SLT were essential elements for successful implementation.

Implications: The findings suggest that Lesson Study is an effective tool for improving teaching and pupil learning, as it encourages collaboration between teachers and allows for more focused planning and assessment. It also requires support from school leadership and training in the model for all involved.

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?

To assist the Literacy and Maths team in extending their reach of support across the Local Authority and in doing so play a part in achieving Lancashire's priorities for 2008/9 (achieving challenging targets in English and Maths and close the gap between the most disadvantaged areas of Lancashire and other areas at all key stages). This was also a fantastic opportunity for me to work alongside other Year 6 teachers and develop new skills as a 'coach', as well as developing learning and teaching techniques both within and beyond my own classroom.

Who might find this case study useful?

- Headteacher
- Middle leader
- Senior leadership team (SLT)
- Subject leader
- Support staff
- 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?

My aim was to work with other Year 6 teachers, in their own school settings, to improve pedagogic technique - with a specific focus on writing. Ultimately, I intended to work with the class teacher, to plan and teach better writing lessons, therefore improving standards and attainment. My aim was to use the Lesson Study model and ensure that the teachers I worked with felt confident to use Lesson Study independently in their own schools.

What were your success criteria?

- Year 6 colleagues teaching writing more effectively and more confidently.
- Standards in writing improve.
- Pupils' confidence increases. One child explained that they, "knew how to improve their own writing."
" This was as a result of the Lesson Study sessions.
- Teachers confident in using the Lesson Study as a tool to improve areas of teaching/learning.

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

- Learning walks / study visits
- Logs or interviews
- Periodic teacher assessment
- Pupils' work
- Test results

Describe the CPD approaches you used

Coaching - Initially I shared the Lesson Study Model with the class teachers. Following this we planned a writing lesson together using the Support for Writing and Talk for Writing materials. Some training in the use of these was necessary, in order for the class teachers to use them independently and consequently raise standards in

writing. Due to the fact that I worked in all three schools twice, I was able to observe a focus child or two, throughout the lesson on the first visit, whereas I took the role of teacher on the second. This varied from school to school. I was able to model various teaching techniques either with the whole class or a smaller group, depending on what the class teacher and I decided upon as a priority. The Lesson Study model is an excellent tool which enables adults (teachers and teaching assistants) to focus on the needs of the children. We shared good practice and were constantly learning together. This is due to the fact that Lesson Study relies upon joint assessment, joint planning and joint thinking, to move learning forwards.

Who provided you with support?

- Other

How were you supported?

My head teacher was keen for me to become a Strategy Support Teacher for my own professional development. She was invited to attend the initial half day training session, which outlined Lancashire's priorities, details of the Lesson Study model/programme and most importantly for the head, the commitment expected from me as an SST- a total of twelve days out of my own class, during the Spring and Summer Term. Her support and willingness to release me was vital. I am also fortunate in that an HLTA (Higher Level Teaching Assistant) covers my PPA time, however she is also my Teaching Assistant during the morning sessions. As a Year 6 teacher myself, I was confident leaving my own class with her on some occasions, safe in the knowledge that the standards in my own classroom were maintained, whilst I was out.

As a Leading Literacy Teacher in a large county, we receive excellent training from the Literacy Team. The resources and materials I use on a day to day basis, in my own classroom, as a Leading Teacher, went hand in hand with the new concept of 'Lesson Study', once I was working as a Strategy Support Teacher in schools. We also received half a day training on the Lesson Study Model and half a day was dedicated to meeting the head teachers of the three schools I worked in. This was another key factor, as all the head teachers were briefed on the model I used in their schools, with their staff. We were also able to arrange the initial planning day and share any important information about the cohort or staff involved. Finally, since completing the programme I have been in contact with other colleagues who have been involved in Lesson Study through the National Strategies forum for Leading Teachers and Practitioners.

Impact

What has been the overall impact on pupil learning?

The children were more confident, independent writers. The use of Assessment for Learning Techniques and the Support for Writing materials were key to this success, as the children in all three schools, in differing ability groups, were certainly much more aware of the positive aspects of their own writing and areas to develop.

Thoughts you think are relevant to overall impact on learning

I believe that the Lesson Study Model is an extremely powerful tool, due to the fact that both teachers involved are very much equal. The success of any lesson, is the shared responsibility of the Lead Teacher and their colleague. The approach and skills required from the Lead Teacher, in another colleagues school and class, were quite different to those I have previously used during planning support or a mentoring type role. The class teachers willingness to take part in the LessonStudy sessions is also key.

Quotes you think are relevant to overall impact on learning

" The focus is on the lesson, not the teacher who taught the lesson; the lesson after all is a group product, and all members of the group feel responsible for the outcome of their plan." Stigler and Hiebert, *The Teaching Gap* (Free Press 1999).

Quantitative evidence of impact on pupil learning

- Periodic teacher assessment
- Test results

Qualitative evidence of impact on pupil learning

- Learning walks / study visits
- Logs or interviews
- Pupils' work

Describe the evidence of impact on pupil learning

Children made better progress from term to term (according to tracking that I shared with the class teacher and their feedback). Children were better writers and used self evaluation more effectively. For example they were more aware of next steps; what they need to do to improve their writing.

What has been the impact on teaching?

Teaching improved, both mine and the teachers I supported. I am a more reflective practitioner as a consequence of taking part as we were learning from each other in terms of teaching methods, teaching resources and ways of assessing. In two of the three schools the Teaching Assistants felt they were more effective than usual during the lesson study sessions, as they focused on specific objectives with a specific child and generally had a better understanding of their role within the writing lesson. This obviously linked to the depth at which the lesson was planned, which varies from teacher to teacher and school to school.

Within Lancashire, the consultants were keen for us to spread the word and practice- Jamie Oliver style! Hopefully the teachers I worked with now understand how to lead the use of Lesson Study, to improve practice and pupil progress within their own schools.

Evidence of impact on teaching

- Evidence from planning
- Improvements in curriculum documentation
- Teacher perceptions

Describe the evidence of impact on teaching

Discussions with the class teachers and teaching assistants were positive. We all felt we were better at teaching writing than we were before the Lesson Study sessions. Planning was much more focused due to the time and number involved in the planning process. All adults were involved in observing a focus child therefore the evaluation process was very valuable and enabled us to feed areas for improvements into the following lesson study session. Teachers and teaching assistants also continued successful techniques beyond the sessions.

What has been the impact on school organisation and leadership?

We are now in the process of applying Lesson Study to other areas of the curriculum within my school. As a senior leader in my school, we're using this model to assist with the introduction of Guided Maths sessions/ APP.

Evidence of impact on school organisation and leadership

Teachers using the Lesson Study Model can share the responsibility of school improvement in terms of planning, assessing, learning and teaching. Staff at all levels within a school and across Key Stages or departments can play a positive role in facilitating improvement first hand either within a familiar subject, topic, area or beyond. Therefore, from my fairly limited experience of Lesson Study, I believe it to be an extremely useful, non-threatening tool for teachers working at any stage in their career.

Summary

What is the crucial thing that made the difference?

Good interpersonal skills from the outset and a positive working relationship between the teachers working on Lesson Study.

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

Secure Assessment for Learning that is well embedded in the classroom, good subject knowledge and a willingness to experiment with new pedagogic techniques are all essential. Support from the Head teacher and SLT, as well as some kind of training on the Lesson Study model for the Head, Class Teacher and Lead Teacher was also key.

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

From January, I am starting to work with three new schools and focus on group work in Literacy, bridging the gaps for children who achieved a Level 2c at the end of Key Stage One... We are aiming to ensure that these groups can be secure Level 4 readers and writers. I am also working with the Year 5 teacher in my school, with a similar focus. In addition to this, as Maths Subject Leader, I aim to use Lesson Study to improve Guided Maths sessions throughout classrooms in my own school.

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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. Most 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. This report was awaiting final approval when the National Strategies site was archived.

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