



CASE STUDY REPORT

Reluctant writers project

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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 explore if using active stimuli for writing would motivate boys who were reluctant to write, and to raise their self-esteem by giving them a sense of achievement.

Aims: The main aim was to motivate boys who were reluctant to write by using active stimuli and to raise their self-esteem by giving them a sense of achievement.

Methods: The participants were boys with low self-esteem who were reluctant to write. They were supported by teachers, LA English adviser, and adults unknown to the pupils. The aim was to motivate the boys to write and raise their self-image.

Methods used included taking the pupils off site, using drama activities, having an extra adult present, and providing a celebratory event involving parents.

Findings: The main findings of this case study are that using active stimuli for writing, such as drama activities and taking pupils off-site, can motivate boys who are reluctant to write and improve their self-image. This can lead to extended pieces of narrative writing and poems.

Implications: The findings suggest that using active stimuli for writing can be an effective way to motivate boys who are reluctant to write, and can help to raise their self-image and sense of achievement. It can also encourage collaboration between schools.

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

Keywords: Secondary education; English - writing

Introduction

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

We wanted to discover if using more active stimuli for writing would encourage boys who were reluctant to write. These boys generally had low self-esteem. A secondary aim was to raise the boys' self image by giving them a sense of achievement and of being special. We also wanted to take the opportunity to encourage collaboration between the secondary school and one of its principal feeder primaries, with a view to improving curricular transition.

Who might find this case study useful?

- Headteacher
- Middle leader
- National Strategies consultant
- Subject leader
- 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?

We wanted boys to enjoy the experience of success in writing and to be motivated to write more in the future.

What were your success criteria?

Each boy was to produce a poem and an extended piece of narrative writing.

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

- Pupil consultation data
- Pupils' work

Describe the CPD approaches you used

The LA English adviser gave a presentation to the teachers based on Debra Myhill's work on boys' writing.

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

LA secondary English adviser.

Who provided you with support?

- Local authority staff

How were you supported?

LA secondary English adviser attended a couple of meetings to discuss outline plans for the project.

Impact

What has been the overall impact on pupil learning?

The boys all produced sustained narrative writing and poems. All had previously been very reluctant to write more than a few words.

Thoughts you think are relevant to overall impact on learning

Using drama activities and locating the work outside the normal place of learning were very powerful ways of motivating the boys.

Quotes you think are relevant to overall impact on learning

"I am better writer." (sic) "More creative." "This helped me in my writing." "It has give me experience." (sic)

Quantitative evidence of impact on pupil learning

- Periodic teacher assessment

Qualitative evidence of impact on pupil learning

- Pupil consultation data
- Pupils' work

Describe the evidence of impact on pupil learning

The boys all produced extended pieces of narrative writing and poems.

Pupil questionnaires indicated that they had enjoyed the experience and that many felt they were better writers because of it. Some said that they would use note books in preparation for future writing.

What has been the impact on teaching?

Teachers have adopted a more active approach in preparation for writing (e.g. using pictures, drama activities and oral rehearsal).

Evidence of impact on teaching

- Teacher perceptions

Describe the evidence of impact on teaching

Teachers say that they have adopted more active approaches to preparing boys for writing.

What has been the impact on school organisation and leadership?

There is a resolve to continue this cross-school collaboration on an annual basis.

Evidence of impact on school organisation and leadership

Continuing discussions between the teachers involved.

Summary

What is the crucial thing that made the difference?

Taking the pupils off site and using drama activities.

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

A suitable site for the activities to take place. Adults that are unknown to the pupils, but who can provide 'expert' input.

What CPD session and resources were particularly useful?

Discussing research about boys' writing.

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

Identify the students very carefully. Plan carefully and be sure to have an extra adult if possible. Make sure you have a celebratory event that involves parents.

Supplementary Materials

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

- Certificate
- Clevedon Court
- Clevedon Court 2
- Clevedon Court 3
- Examples of pupils' work

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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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