

Improving writing with LVT

Karen Lintin, Feltham Hill Junior School, Hounslow shares her action research project undertaken Easter term 2006.

Identifying the need

Attainment in writing

Children, particularly boys in my class were under-achieving in writing. They did not enjoy writing creatively and produced writing that was not very imaginative. I decided to focus on a mixed group of these 9 and 10-year-old under-achievers to trial the strategies to be implemented.

Attitude towards writing

Questionnaires were given to the target children to assess their opinions of writing. These showed that most did not enjoy writing.

- None of the children enjoyed imaginative writing.
- Four children did not enjoy writing non-fiction pieces.
- Half of the children did not enjoy writing with a partner/in groups.
- Five children are not proud of their writing and one is sometimes proud of his writing.
- Four children do not spend time editing and improving their work.

Some enjoyed writing factual pieces of writing. None of the children were proud of their work. The only writing that the children complete out of school is homework. Overall the questionnaire showed that the children had very negative views towards writing.

Planning an intervention to meet the need

LogoVisual Thinking: Give children story titles/pictures to plan a story from. Use a visual, movable medium to develop and structure ideas as a method of planning a story.

Community of Enquiry: Give children story openings and short stories to question and discuss.

Measuring the status at the start

I decided to level the children's writing based on an unaided piece (using a story opening as a stimulus). *see fig.2 for results.*

Trialling the intervention

*LogoVisual Thinking (LVT):
(over a few weeks during guided writing
– 25 minutes)*

To begin with I trialled this in a small group situation only, as children need a lot of guidance and support in the beginning stages. The children were given a picture of a car travelling down a track surrounded by trees. Firstly, we discussed what was in the picture. Next the children had time to write down anything about the setting, characters, what was happening in the story and what might happen next.

Every idea was written down on a post-it note. As a group we read through and discussed the children's ideas and thought of ways to group them. Firstly they grouped them according to character, setting and action. They then agreed, because it was a story to make groups according to story structure (opening, build-up, complication/problem, resolution and ending). They found that they had so far only collected ideas for the first three sections. We went through these sections and agreed on ideas which they thought would work well. They added additional post-it notes to enhance their plan. Finally, they were given time to write further ideas on post-it notes for the resolution and ending. Again we discussed these ideas and agreed on an imaginative yet sensible story for our final plan. The children also experimented with moving the post-it notes around and laying out the plan indifferent ways (vertical columns).

Using LVT to plan stories

Step 1: Give a group of children a stimulus such as a picture and discuss it briefly.

Step 2: Children note down ideas about what might happen in the story on post-it notes or by using LVT hexagons.

Step 3: Read out the ideas to the group and decide on ways to group them e.g. characters, setting and plot. Ideas can be added or taken away as agreed by the group.

Step 4: Encourage children to arrange them in a story plan style (they should come up with this).

Step 5: Add more ideas; these will probably focus on the resolution and ending.

Step 6: Write, share and evaluate the stories as a group.

Fig 1

The children really enjoyed the experience and were extremely enthusiastic and proud of what they have written. They seem far more confident to suggest ideas and consequently, by bringing their ideas together they developed an imaginative plan.

The children then wrote their opening. They then read out and discussed their openings and their successes. The children then wrote, edited and published their stories; these will now be put into a book form.

Community of Enquiry:

In class we questioned and discussed story openings and short stories. They used the discussions to focus on what happens next. The children explored character, setting and the events likely to follow. They then continued the story in the extended writing lesson the following day. The openings looked at linked to the area covered in the literacy hour traditional tales (a made-up opening) and children's classics (Tom's Midnight Garden). This appeared to give the children confidence to write the next day since they already had some ideas as to what they could include in their stories.

The Impact of the Intervention trialled

Attainment Data

The children have now been assessed again and the target group produced another piece of unaided writing. They were given the choice of planning using LVT or by using the usual taught structure. All children made improvements in their writing. Although it is likely that the children would have improved without this strategy, previous test results show that in the past their development has been at a much slower rate (approximately one third of a level).

see fig.2 for results in summer term.

How did the LVT strategy impact on the children's National Curriculum levels in writing?

Writing Levels at the start:

- Child A: Level 2b
- Child B: Level 2b
- Child C: Level 2a
- Child D: Level 2b
- Child E: Level 2a
- Child F: Level 3c

Writing levels after trialling the intervention:

- Child A: Level 3b (improved by one level)
- Child B: Level 3c (improved by two thirds of a level)
- Child C: Level 3b (improved by two thirds of a level)
- Child D: Level 3b (improved by one level)
- Child E: Level 3b (improved by two thirds of a level)
- Child F: Level 3a (improved by two thirds of a level)

Fig 2

Attitude towards writing

The children were questioned about their writing over three terms. In each term they were given an identical questionnaire and the results showed that they now have a more positive view towards writing:

- All six children now enjoy imaginative writing.
- All six children now enjoy writing with a partner/in groups.
- Five children are now proud of their writing and one is sometimes proud of his writing.
- Five children now spend time editing and improving their work.

However, the majority of the children still do not write at home apart from homework tasks. Half of the children continue to not enjoy writing non-fiction pieces. Hopefully, by planning more non-fiction pieces of writing using the LVT, their attitudes will change and become more positive.

I questioned the group about their opinions on the use of LVT, and their comments were all very positive:

Child A said, *"It is very cool because it's an easier way to plan as it gets you to think more. It's good for discussions and it's more organised. One problem about it is that it takes a long time."*

Child B said, *"It's easier to work in groups because you can share ideas, also it is fun!"*

Child C said, *"I like to work like this because you can discuss ideas. On my own it's harder to think of ideas."*

Child D said, *"I think we should do this more often because it gives you better ideas, you write more and it is easier."*

Child E said, *"This plan is better because you think of more creative ideas and you can take one off if you don't like it."*

Child F said, *"It's easier to think of lots of ideas rather than planning in paragraphs at the beginning."*

Retesting the Intervention

After the initial intervention, I decided to use the LVT with the whole class. The other year 5 classes also trialled it. We planned a fiction and non-fiction piece of writing in this way.

Planning a report

The children were asked in mixed ability groups to join two animals together to make a new animal e.g. a Crocoroo. The children came up with ideas on post-it notes to describe the animal. The ideas were then put into groups chosen by the children. Examples of categories include; habitat, appearance and food.

The following day, the children wrote a report based on the Logovisual Thinking plan. After writing an introduction, they used each LVT cluster as a plan for each paragraph. The children wrote some fantastic reports as a result of this.

Planning a story

The children used the picture of a hut in the woods as a stimulus for planning a story in mixed ability groups. The target group helped to explain the method to the class. The class were stopped on a number of occasions so that the next step in the planning process could be explained. They spent one lesson planning and one lesson writing the story.

Developing these strategies further

I have subsequently presented my data to the Thinking Skills Co-ordinator, and we have since used these strategies with good results with other writing genres such as balanced arguments, poetry etc.

To make this strategy more effective in assessment situations, I intend to develop a method for children to plan using LVT individually.

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