

Building Bridges in Literacy P6-S2

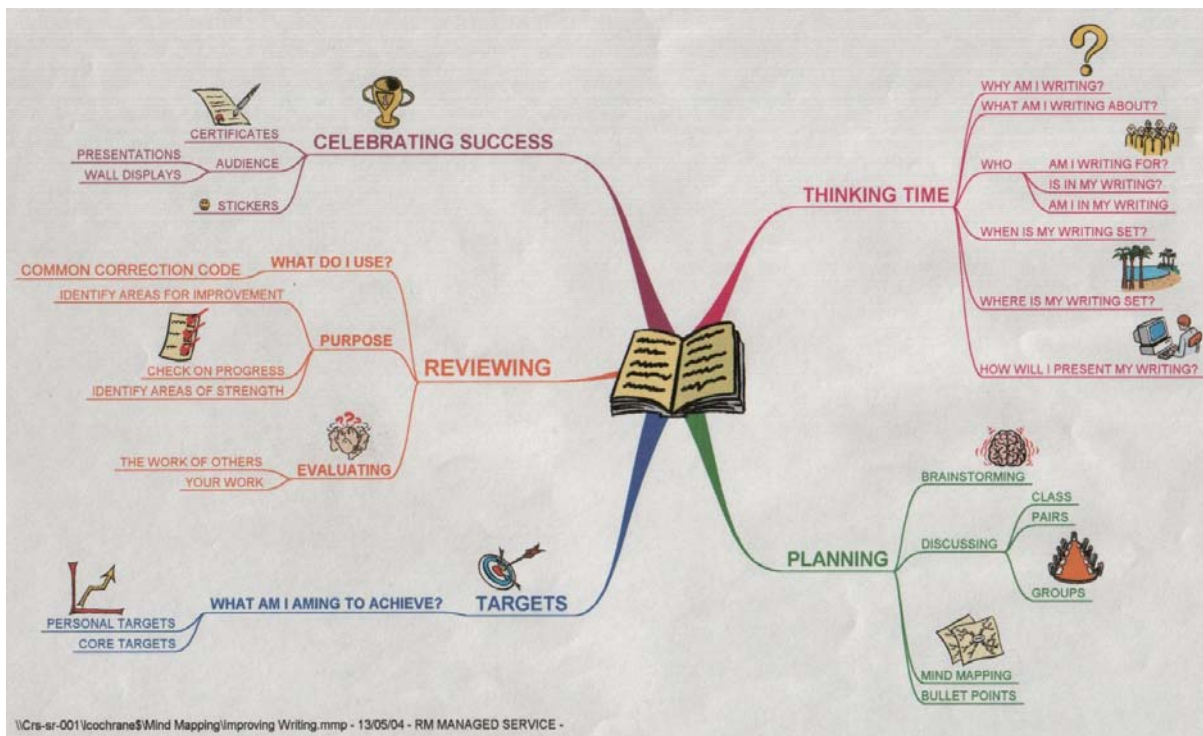
South Lanarkshire Council

Case Study – December 2004

‘Improving Writing with Specific Attention to Gender and the Effect on Motivation and Behaviour’

‘This has been a textbook example of how co-operation across subjects, sectors and levels could work magic to begin the process of truly raising achievement for all our pupils through the focus of literacy...’

(A member of the South Lanarkshire Building Bridges Project Team.)



Introduction

School Contexts

The schools involved in the project for South Lanarkshire were Trinity High School in Cambuslang and St Columbkille's Primary School in Rutherglen.

The Team

- Caroline Convery – P6/S2 Support Teacher, Trinity High School Cluster
- Lorraine Cochrane – PT Support for Learning, Trinity High School
- Liz McWhinnie – PT English, Trinity High School
- Patricia Rossi, Head Teacher, Trinity High School
- Geraldine Caulfield, DHT, Trinity High School
- Helen McShane, Head Teacher, St Columbkille's Primary
- Catherine McDonald, St Columbkille's Primary
- Janey Mauchline, Adviser in Languages

The Feelings – at the start

'We're not here to learn about the project – we ARE the project!'

'How will I find the time to do all this and teach everything else?'

And during

'Boy, have I underestimated the willingness and initiative of the selected schools and staff.'

'Don't panic! We'll get there!'

'This is exciting, frustrating and exhausting'

'Problems have been thrown up that we did not anticipate.'

And Now?

'I am sure that what the South Lanarkshire Project Team has achieved will impact on SL's clusters and will complement formative assessment strategies.'

'I am proud of the team.'

'We did it properly from beginning to end!'

'I have been pleasantly surprised at how much responsibility the children will assume for reviewing and editing their writing if they are given the opportunity, and how willing they are to work towards writing targets if they have some say in what these are.'

'...this project will truly build bridges into the future in our cluster.'

'I have gained a great deal by being involved in this project and so too have my pupils.'

What did we do?

The Action Plan

Having agreed on the overall target of 'Improving Writing with Specific Attention to Gender and the Effect on Motivation and Behaviour', and carried out an audit, the team drew up an action plan - it was ambitious!

- To write, consult on and agree across sectors and subjects a language policy including a writing policy;
 - To establish a common correction code across sectors and subjects;
 - To teach/reinforce evaluation skills to the pilot classes;
 - To agree writing strategies to be employed;
 - To consult parents;
 - To write /adapt units to include the strategies;
 - To keep a weekly journal of progress;
 - To create writing walls in each of the pilot classrooms;
 - To produce A-E targets written in pupil-friendly language;
 - To produce strengths and targets booklets;
 - To create core writing targets posters for display;
 - To produce skills cards to help pupils edit/evaluate work;
 - To create rules posters for classroom display to aid self/peer evaluation;
 - To produce parental handbook to support pupil writing
 - To develop use of Mind Genius;
 - To target the way core skills are taught across the primary/secondary divide.
- **it produced results!**

What has been the Impact/Benefit?

- Sharing good practice and networking;
- Improvement in achievement and motivation;
- Positive parental involvement;
- Targets overtaken;
- Roll out to other departments and schools;
- Improved primary/secondary transition;
- Will be highlighted to HMI as a strength;
- Materials were developed for use in the five sections of the agreed writing process: Getting Started, Structured Planning, Target Setting, Reviewing and Celebrating,
- Teachers in SL enjoyed a display of the project in the Advisory Service;
- A child-centred approach has been developed;
- Improved questioning techniques;
- Mind-mapping developed to help pupils with independent planning;
- Self-evaluation techniques to help pupils reflect on their writing;
- Modelling writing;
- Timed activities to improve focus and encourage the boys;
- An improvement in writing. In one of the pilot classes out of 24 pupils, 14 improved their writing grades in National Assessments. 12 of the 14 were boys. 6 of that improved by 2 grades, from C to E. 5 of those who improved by two grades were also boys;
- An overall improvement in the quality of writing of all the P7 pupils was evident. Pupils were able to write at length for a variety of purposes and they could discuss the strategies that worked for them;
- The bridge worked. Pupils were comfortable in the knowledge that they would use the same strategies when they went to secondary school and were delighted when some of their work was displayed in Trinity High and the Advisory Service.

Looking Forward

We need to:

- Maintain the momentum;
- Implement the successful strategies across the curriculum;
- Disseminate the materials across the curriculum and into all the cluster's associated primaries;
- Formulate and put into practice the language policy across the school and the cluster to build literacy skills to improve achievement for all the pupils;
- Provide CPD opportunities for teachers in the authority.

What did the pupils think?

At the end of session 86 pupils were surveyed and the results are as follows:

What types of writing do you like doing?	Personal Writing		Imaginative Writing		Functional Writing	
	8 B	9 G	35 B	36 G	16 B	15 G

Do you think you have improved in any of these areas?	Planning	Interesting Ideas	Varied Sentence Structure	Paragraphing	Wide Vocab	Spelling
	26 B 26 G	30 B 23 G	20 B 19 G	22 B 22 G	17 B 15 G	28 B 26 G

What strategies did you feel helped you to improve your writing?	Looking at Purpose	Brainstorming	Mind Mapping	Core Writing Targets	Personal Writing Targets	Good Models	Stars and Wishes	Word Banks	Reviewing your work and that of others
	26 B 19 G	22 B 17 G	31 B 29 G	8 B 10 G	23 B 15 G	16 B 11 G	14 B 14 G	28 B 26 G	31 B 33 G

Primary Perspective

Helen McShane, Head Teacher, St Columbkille's Primary School

As the Head Teacher of the primary school involved in the project, my main task was to arrange information sessions for all the staff involved and to match the P7 writing blocks to the P6-S2 support teacher's timetable.

We had agreed before the project that we would set the P 7 pupils in ability groups during their writing block. We decided to continue with this but we added a control group of four boys who would work within the most able group. In addition to our main aim, we intended to monitor the impact of using the writing strategies on the work of the four boys and compare it to the achievements of pupils of similar ability within the other sets.

Regular meetings were arranged to allow staff time to become familiar with the strategies to be introduced. It was evident from early on in our work that we needed to define clearly what was meant by each strategy and to develop a shared understanding of how it would be presented to the pupils. The big picture, a common correction code and wordbank jotters were introduced and proved successful across the ability range. The control group were using more expressive words and phrases than those of similar ability in other groups and for the most part the pieces of work they were producing were much longer.

The meetings were also an opportunity for staff to discuss the successes or otherwise of the work done to date. Problems were thrown up that we had not anticipated. One member of staff became very frustrated with recurring errors in her group's work. Had she been working with only her own class, she would have targeted her language teaching to eradicate these errors. However, as she was working across three classes, she felt she was not really getting to grips with the problem. Our solution was to restructure our sets for the summer term and return the pupils to their original classes.

An overall improvement in the quality of the writing of all our P7 pupils was evident. Pupils were able to write at length for a variety of purposes and they could discuss the strategies that worked for them. They were comfortable in the knowledge that they would be using the same strategies when they went to secondary school and they were delighted when some of their work was exhibited both in the Advisory Service and in Trinity High School. A word of caution for those about to embark on a similar project – targeting common strategies across the sectors was very successful but the success was due to the enthusiasm, hard work and talent of the staff involved. Strategies are only as good as the practitioner who teaches them.

Catherine MacDonald, St Columbkille's Primary School

The Building Bridges Project began in October 2003 with Primary 7 as the focus group. Setting was established as follows:

- Group 1 –32 pupils (more able)
- Group 2 – 25 pupils
- Group 3 – 18 pupils

Functional Writing - October 2003 - January 2004

Prior to the first writing lesson a common correction code was issued and discussed. This was placed in a prominent position on the writing wall and a copy issued to each pupil. This remained at the front of their writing book as a reference point during re-drafting.

From October 2003-January 2004 the groups focused on formal letter writing using a programme of study compiled by Christine Findlay (Higher Results Consultancy). Before each lesson commenced a checklist of skills central to Functional Writing were discussed. Models of letters (big picture) and wordbanks were provided to highlight tone and appropriate language. Timed tasks were given for activities such as completion of planners, highlighting appropriate language chosen and paired discussion. Pupils, in pairs, looked at completed work and ways to improve it. Homework tasks included completion of work, planning and redrafting. Parental support was encouraged during planning, proof-reading and signing completed work. Letters written were posted and replies received giving them a real sense of purpose and audience.

Imaginative Writing - January 2004 -April 2004

Music and video tapes were used to accompany the poems, 'The Highwayman' by Alfred Noyes and 'The Stolen Child' by WB Yeats. Lesson notes for 'The Highwayman' were supplemented using, 'That's A Great Story!' By Christine Findlay. The poems were the stimulus used in this block of Imaginative Writing. Wordbanks were provided to highlight the use of simile, metaphor, alliteration etc. Pupils were encouraged to add examples and share them with others. Each pupil had his/her own dictionary and thesaurus to check spelling and vary word choice. Planning was very structured in the initial stages and as a result progress through the first story was slow. Pupils engaged in timed tasks and a 'big picture' was provided before each task commenced. Parental support was encouraged at each stage from planning to proof-reading and pupils were invited to read their work to the class. Opportunities were provided for writing to be displayed in school and South Lanarkshire Advisory Centre, Hope Street, Hamilton.

The Secondary Perspective

Patricia Rossi, Head Teacher, Trinity High School

Rationale – Why Should We Get Involved?

- Raising Achievement Agenda
- Concerns re S1/S2 "Treading Water" and "Not Building on Previous Knowledge".
- Gender Issues – Underachievement of Boys.
- Desire to Strengthen Primary Links
- Development of I.C.T.
- Cross Sectoral Working
- Fosters Parental Partnership
- Review of Learning and Teaching Policy
- Opportunity to involve various departments.
- Chance to enhance profile of the cluster.
- Helped to define role of P6-S2 Support Teacher.
- Access to Resources

My Role

Leader	-	Give guidance and direction, keep on focus. Remain optimistic and positive.
Facilitator	-	Time for meetings, in-service days. Space on The School Development Plan.
Supporter	-	Reassure, encourage, support.
Manager team	-	Promoted teamwork, but also delegate and maximize strengths of the team

What is the Impact / Benefit?

- We did it properly from beginning to end! Audit, Action Plan, Implement, Evaluate and Review.
- Sharing good practice and networking
- Additional Resources
- Improvement in achievement and motivation
- Positive parental involvement
- Presentation of work and delivery of In-service
- Targets overtaken
- "A Success Story"
- Roll out to other departments and schools
- Retains a place in school and cluster development plans.
- Fun and enjoyment!
- Improved primary / secondary transition.
- Will be highlighted to HMI as a "strength"

Caroline Convery – P6-S2 Support Teacher

Having accepted a position with South Lanarkshire Council in April 2003 I was surprised to receive a phone call telling me I was booked for the Building Bridges National Conference in Edinburgh on June 6th- more so as I wasn't due to take up my new post until the end of May. A few alarm bells began to tinkle!

At the conference I bonded immediately with the other delegates from South Lanarkshire, especially Helen McShane from St Columbkille's Primary who was a kindred spirit which did nothing to lessen the shock we felt when we learned that, far from learning ABOUT the project, we WERE the project.

Three months down the line the project gained impetus. An audit was in progress, the action plan drawn up and individual tasks assigned. My own role was to link to all parts of the project. The flexibility of my timetable meant that I was able to teach cooperatively in all three classes (one primary, two S1 secondary) selected to participate. Being in and out of all classes regularly allowed for a frequent and frank exchange of ideas: not always constructive and at times fraught!

So everyone was kept up to date across the sectors on a regular, informal basis. One of us always had the big picture and allowed the sharing of successes and problems. Team members, particularly in the Primary school, felt involved as I was on hand to offer practical support in the classroom.

Another part of my role was to help develop materials for the project itself and in this I worked closely with Lorraine Cochrane, Principal Teacher Support for Learning. We had already begun collaborating on a Primary 7 Transition Skills Programme and saw the possibility of dovetailing the two projects. We developed materials for use in the five sections of our agreed Writing Process: Getting Started; Structured Planning; Target Setting; Reviewing and Celebrating. We also formatted Pupil/Parent Questionnaires and, along with our Primary colleagues assembled a display in our Advisory Service.

It's been an interesting and exciting year. There have been many high points and quite a few low points but it has been worth the effort and my approach to the teaching of Writing has changed. My expectation of what the children can achieve is more realistic and my approach more child centred. I have been pleasantly surprised at how much responsibility the children will assume for reviewing and editing if afforded the opportunity, and how willing they are to work toward Writing Targets if they have had some say in them. I am now looking forward to the challenges of disseminating materials across the curriculum and into all of our associated Primary Schools.

Elizabeth McWhinnie, Principal Teacher of English

On first hearing about the project I had little idea of its scope, and one of our English teachers attended the initial conference. I had always been interested in the development of formative assessment and that the recent overemphasis on summative assessment can be at the expense of better learning. My problem was how to marry the demands of the project with those of running a large department. But since raising the profile of formative assessment, and improving writing results, especially for boys were major development plan aims I was looking for a way of ensuring that our pupils would benefit from the project. The funding was also attractive and as I was keen to further develop ICT I felt our preliminary work with Support for Learning on projects involving Powerpoint and Mind Mapping might be developed. The ideal solution was that although I would be part of the team, two interested members of staff would work with two classes.

Luckily, the acting DHT in our department, Geraldine Caulfield, volunteered to work in the project with her new S1 class, especially as she was combining this with her new and demanding post and we seemed ready to go. However, our original volunteer suddenly dropped out-I had to be the other teacher, with my new 1J1.

The team agreed at our initial meeting that writing should be targeted and that we should use the formative assessment strategies as our major tool. None of these were new to us. They were already agreed English Department policy on Learning and Teaching as well as that of South Lanarkshire Council. I was keen that an explicit School Language Policy should reemphasise issues such as common correction code and approaches to self-evaluation as all recent scientific thinking showed improved literacy was the key to raising attainment across the curriculum. We were impressed by the presentation on the Black Box by the practitioners. Our agreed strategies were improved questioning techniques, preferred learning styles and self evaluation as well as Core Skills targets for the whole school. Further benefits would be improved communications with primaries, other departments and parents. The team also decided that improved behaviour of boys would be a target.

We felt that Building Bridges would not be a flash in the pan but the start of a lasting commitment to improvement in the cluster.

1J1 and Building Bridges

My first thought about the Class was positive: there were only 24 pupils in the class! In addition, I would have two periods of support from Caroline, our P6-S2 Co-ordinator and further ancillary help provided by an extra teacher funded through the scheme. Primary National Test results suggested a wide range of ability, with many pupils' writing results trailing reading- plenty of support would ensure progress.

The biggest difficulty would be to fit everything into the four periods per week to follow the department's core programme, including formal assessment of Close Reading and Textual Analysis and completing our rigorous programme of minimum assessment. I had to find a way of building bridges and making it all part of normal classwork. Happily, little new material would be needed since the strategies were already Departmental Policy they had been written into the units I planned to use:

Introductory Unit (Close Reading, Essay Writing, Letter Writing, Talk Activities etc)

Skellig(Caroline provided new material for this unit)Groupwork, Research, Critical Evaluation

Gothic Horror Writing-Gothic Horror Story

The Listeners-Critical Evaluation of Poetry

Frankenstein-Critical Evaluation of Drama

All these units laid specific emphasis on improving writing as well as reading and the strategies were already written in to the units. However the project made it imperative that the strategies should be emphasised and perhaps refined.

What Worked?

1. Our team! Everyone had to combine the meetings and tasks with their already busy remits and roles but it was everyone's absolute commitment which impressed me. It was a textbook example of how co-operation across subjects, sectors and levels could work magic to begin the process of truly raising achievement for all our pupils through the focus on literacy and the working of a language policy shared by all involved. We feel that we are still only at the beginning and that the work started on this project will truly build bridges into the future in our cluster.

2. Improved questioning techniques-despite my ingrained habit of asking for 'hands up'(much to the chagrin/eventually amusement- of Caroline)these really helped reflection in class leading to more class involvement.

3. Mind Mapping-as planned, a successful way of helping pupils towards more independent planning instead of excessive reliance on the teacher plan for creative, personal and critical writing as well as the gathering of evidence.

4. Self evaluation techniques really helped pupils to reflect on writing, including personal targets, and to see that they could learn so much better through taking responsibility for the quality of their written work. Although at times there was a fair bit of noise in the classroom, this was mainly productive and part of the interactive element we were trying to foster, including the **simplified 5-14 sheets** also used by pupils to highlight their personal targets and appended to all Writing and Critical Evaluation pieces.(See Appendix One)

5. Modelling was, as expected, one of the most useful activities. The pupils examined teacher models for 'The Listeners'. One of the best lessons was when the pupils modelled the introductions to their Gothic horror essays, copied these on to acetate and gave presentations to the rest of the class, pointing out strengths and areas for development.

6. Timed Activities-improved focus and introduced an element of competition which greatly encouraged the boys in particular to greater efforts. (I used a small egg timer with a bell but could really do with one which rings louder!)

7. Group Work-very effective in all units as the interactive element encouraged the boys, particularly in the research/reporting back section done for 'Skellig'.

8. The Writing Wall-particularly as it was used for the Gothic Horror unit with all pupils contributing and many using the resultant language to improve their finished essays. The inclusion of the new posters with the Correction Code and Core Skills on all classroom walls and now included in the homework diaries.

9. Gothic Horror Presentation with Certificates(real audiences) helped to motivate pupils to do well though the delay well past the unit meant that some momentum was lost. The best aspect of this was that pupils did the main judging of Best Story, best Gothic beginnings/endings, monster etc. as it made self evaluation exciting and motivating with the element of competition.

10. THE MAIN AIM-the writing improved. Out of 24 pupils 14 improved their writing grades in National Assessments. 12 of the 14 were boys. 6 of that 14 improved by two grades, from C to E-5 of those who improved by two grades were also boys.

The behaviour of the class was affected significantly by using the strategies, it was much more productive when active, varied lessons were the norm, even though six of the boys in my group were on school behaviour cards at one point no significant problems arose in these lessons.

What Didn't Work?

1. The timetabling of the class. Three out of the only four periods available were in the afternoon when the children were tired and often out of sorts. This was most evident at the beginning of the term when they had not adjusted to life at secondary so it was difficult to motivate them as well as they could have been. They were like a different class on the Friday period 2 slot!

2. Trying to fit in the required curriculum with all the minimum assessment work., National Assessments(including a new section), Library Skills Unit(10 weeks)

3. The ancillary support teacher. Some very valiant work was done but inexperienced staff coupled with staff changes meant we did not get the best out of the money spent.

4. Careless errors in writing-made by some pupils in this group made bad habits seem curiously ingrained. Even redrafting did not seem to help-although overall most pupils' work improved-(see Results) and we are pressing on, expecting even better results in S2 tests!

5. The Writing Jotter-because I did not try it. We are piloting its use in some classes this year and the department will review its use. This is also true of the other sections included in 'Appendices'-while all are useful as skills sheets-the English Department will need to consider which ones are practical to use in large groups where we are often working with only one teacher.

The class responded very positively to formative strategies as they worked best when actively engaged in learning. They produced work of a high order and enjoyed and benefited from all the usual activities of modelling, pair work, peer and self evaluation.

Future Developments

I hope to continue to make my contribution in several ways:-

1. I am **continuing to work with the class, now 2J1**, to raise standards of literacy within the class. We are now beginning to look at the use of other interactive strategies to improve learning to build on those which are in daily use.

Importantly the

2. To **share our experiences with the** department to continue to emphasis formative assessment strategies which teachers already use and to persuade them to try some for perhaps the first time. Lorraine and Caroline are working with a number of English classes and presentations to the department on Mind Mapping and the Star System have already been mooted.

The department have already discussed making formative assessment the main emphasis for our Class Folders monitoring system to help to share good practice with each other as part of our development plan aims.

3. **ICT** to put into effect plans to pilot Mind Genius and to use the LCD projectors to help to raise achievement within the department and to make this an integral part of the Development Plan and CPD for all our teachers.

4. As Principal Teacher of English to continue to work with the group to **help to formulate and put into practice our Language Policy across the school and the cluster** to build literacy skills to improve achievement for all our pupils along with members of the team.

Geraldine Caulfied-Principal Teacher of Guidance, Acting DHT and English teacher- 1M2 and Building Bridges.

Getting Started

Like Liz, I didn't attend the first conference in Edinburgh but came on board by default. Thus, I was thrown into the team although it did help that my S1 class were studying " The Dragon In The Garden " by Reginald Maddox and the area which my class was going to be involved in was personal writing and this novel afforded the opportunity. Most worrying for me was I hadn't taught an S1 class for seven years and I was also embarking on the acting post of Depute Head!!! Indeed, I was very much conscious of covering our entire departmental programme and the improving the targets set in our English department.

The novel related to the pupils' own experience. It was about a boy starting a new school and for him it was his first experience of school as he had previously been taught at home. In fact, one of the most descriptive pieces in the novel was that of the fight scene.

Gender

I was very conscious of gender issues and I had to get the boys in the class motivated so the fight scene was something the boys and the girls could relate to. The pupils had to write about either being involved in a fight or having witnessed one. Right from the outset, I was conscious of boys' preferred learning styles – being given a clear picture of the task; boys tend to look for short term success; tend to be poorer at organising and structuring work – so like to be given small tasks; boys also like interaction – lots of moving about. So I really had to incorporate such styles into my teaching. My classroom has little space so I incorporated more paired learning as opposed to groups – using boys and girls; as well as same sex and matching different abilities but not across the spectrum.

What Worked?

The pupils in the class enjoyed working in pairs – moving around the pairing definitely helped. All of the tasks were timed which improved focus. Modelling helped all pupils and mind-mapping was very much a feature of lessons and the pupils thoroughly enjoyed using coloured pens which in itself made even the lower ability pupils' work pleasing to the eye and was very therapeutic to less motivated pupils. The Writing Wall helped pupils make use of new vocabulary from the novel for personal writing.

Another strategy, which worked well was the use of stickers in setting strengths and targets.

What didn't work?

Well the writing jotters did not arrive on time! Hence, it was a case of re-visiting some pieces of writing in order to keep a collection of the pupils' work there. Time was also an issue but since everything is always under the demands of time and I feel that even though more time had to be given over to completion of tasks, finished writing was much improved.

Success Criteria

Was it successful? Pupil feedback demonstrated success. Responses to pupil questionnaire were very positive in relating improvements made in writing assignments or what helped in planning. Our "5-14" National Assessments had an 88% pass and many of our pupils were making use of the Writing Wall in planning for National Assessments – not just giving literal accounts but including thoughts and feelings in personal writing assignments.

Looking forward

This session, I am looking forward to teaching this class again; making use and building upon the Writing Wall and I have already made use of the strategies with other groups. Writing jotters will be used for imaginative writing and for writing about texts. I am also hoping to try out the software on Mind Genius with my classes.

It would give me a lot of satisfaction and my pupils in building on level E with my class using the STAR writing system:

Statement

Textual Evidence

Analysis

Response

I feel I have gained a great deal by being involved in this project as have my pupils.

Lorraine Cochrane-Principal Teacher-Role of Support for Learning

Why Not Me?

My first introduction to the Building Bridges Project was overhearing a conversation in the staff room about a project that seemed to involve everybody except me. My reaction was to ask "How can you look at improving literacy without involving SFL?" In the months to come I was at times to regret that conceit. By then of course I had managed to talk myself on to the project – I was part of the team.

My wish to be part of this initiative was because I was already involved in a number of projects which seemed naturally to link with BB. These were the Transitions project, Parental Workshops and a small Mind Mapping pilot.

The ambitious aim of the Transitions Project was to raise achievement in the early years of secondary by working with Primary 6 & 7 pupils to become better learners. I worked with Caroline Convery, the Pr 6 / S3 Support Teacher to devise and teach a unit in our associate primary schools. The focus of the unit was on collaborative working, organisational skills and planning for writing. It seemed sensible to merge the two projects where there were common elements.

I was also interested at looking at improving writing as many of the IEP's I had to organise focussed on pupils coming into Trinity with very low National test results in writing. The concept of

setting targets and focussing pupils on how they could take and keep ownership of their writing was a challenging one.

What therefore is my role in the project?

Well, as usual in my role as a SFL teacher it is to encourage, to support teachers and pupils, to persuade and to disseminate good practice across the curriculum.

In the first year I had limited teaching contact with the pilot classes. My role was a varied one. All of our meetings were lively, with everybody having an opportunity to suggest ideas. As usual, sometimes I got carried away and not all of my suggestions were immediately welcomed. My input included helping devise the questionnaires, the Parental Handbook, the self-evaluation sheets and the celebrating success stickers. At a more mundane level, I was a typist, a searcher of posters and stickers and a dab hand at wall displays.

What part will I play in the rollout?

I will be taking a more active teaching role, working with a new S2 class to roll out the strategies within the English department. I am also working with the Chemistry department to look at how they might develop pupils' writing within Science. As ever, I am looking at ways of incorporating new initiatives. Trinity is one of the schools piloting Mind Genius, the mind mapping software and I am hoping to increase the use of this to help with writing. SFL is heavily committed to diversifying the curriculum by exploring alternative learning strategies and many of these will be piloted this year, increasing the range of strategies covered in the first year of BB. In the near future, I will be involved in our authority's Staff Development programme, helping to deliver three In-service courses on BB.

What have I gained from my involvement?

I have benefited from being part of a team approach. It has, at times been exciting, frustrating and exhausting. The opportunity to work so closely with one of our primaries has been a valuable one. The challenge ahead is to maintain the momentum, to implement the successful strategies across the curriculum and to help to deliver the improvements in individual pupil's writing.

An Education Adviser's Views

In the Beginning...

The first national seminar made me panic! I felt that I had misled the schools involved because of the way the project was presented to us as more of a fait accompli than the initial letter suggested. I remember an overwhelming feeling of guilt and, at the same time, some anger. However, the 'we-can-do-this' part of me then set in.

Then...

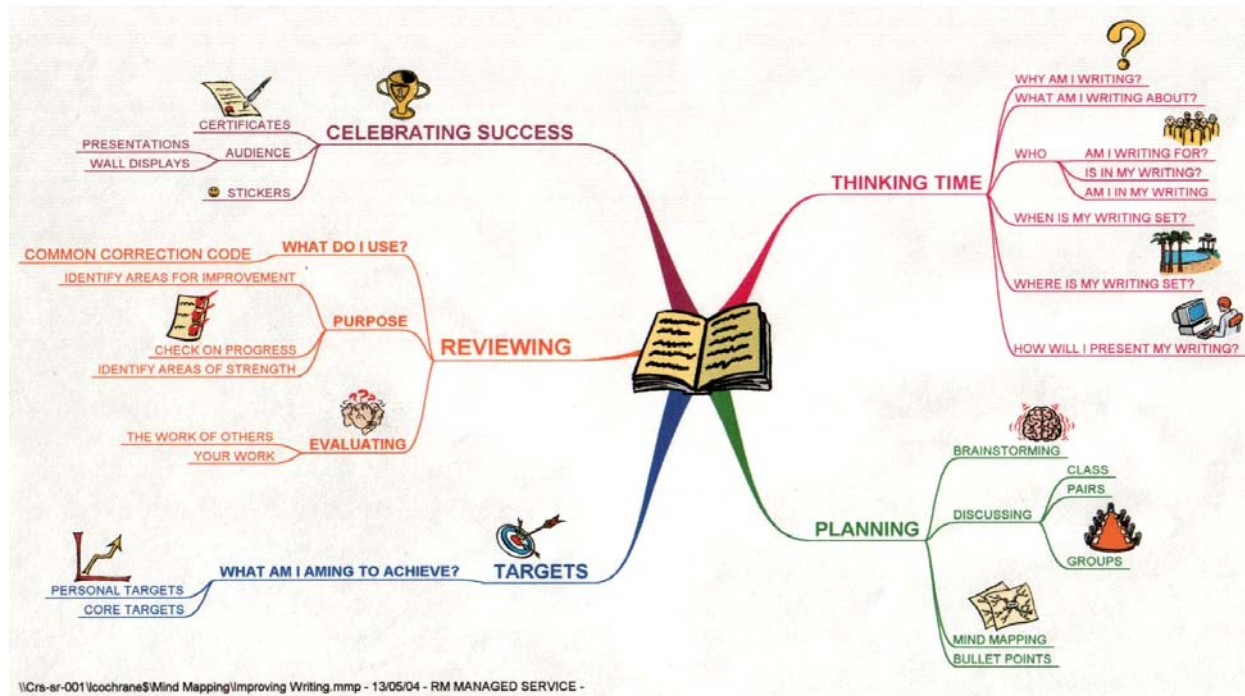
Boy did I underestimate the willingness and initiative of the selected schools and personnel! It seemed that they were raring to go and I remember feeling the first thrill that we/they were planning something which would make a difference to the pupils and their teachers.

As Time Went On...

Like Topsy, the project and the group's ideas and approaches seemed to grow and grow. They grabbed the project and hit the ground running...and running. I remember at that time feeling almost redundant but also very proud of the group. The Project Leader, Caroline Convery, and her team knew what they wanted to do, talked (and at times argued) their way through the project, produced and trialled strategies/resources etc., involved other departments in the school and kept excellent records of what was happening. The workload was a worry at times but, no matter what, everyone kept on going.

Now...

I don't think any of us realised the kind of commitment the Building Bridges project would be or that it would extend to this session. We have already had a display of the group's work in the Education Resources Learning Centre in Hamilton and staff development courses have been included in this session's CPD Pack. At this point I am hopeful, anticipating that the 32 projects collectively will support local authorities in their improvement agenda; I am grateful to the team whose ability and commitment have made the South Lanarkshire project a success; I am sure that what the SL project team has achieved will impact on South Lanarkshire's clusters and will complement formative assessment strategies.



Appendices – All of these are contained in the Powerpoint Presentation which is part of the South Lanarkshire Case Study.

- Core Writing Targets
- Personal Targets
- How to Become s Better Reviewer
- How to Become a Better Speller
- Stars and Wishes
- Strengths and Targets
- Transition
- Writing Frames
- Placemats: English; History; Science; P.E.
- Parental Handbook
- December 2004**