

Building Bridges in Literacy Newsletter

August 2004



Building Bridges in Literacy P6–S2 A National Pilot Project

Welcome to the second edition of the Building Bridges in Literacy newsletter. In this newsletter you can read:

- about changes to the project support team and links with Assessment is for Learning
- a report on the third round of area seminars
- personal accounts of the project from practitioners
- a report on the conference Travel and Make the Road: Moving Forward Together
- about developments on the Building Bridges in Literacy website.

A National Pilot Project

‘To raise standards of educational attainment for all in schools, especially in the core skills of literacy ...’

National Priorities in Education, Scottish Executive

Building Bridges in Literacy P6–S2, the national pilot project managed by Learning and Teaching Scotland and funded by the Scottish Executive Education Department, is exploring ways that have been tried and tested by teachers to develop effective curricular liaison and to ensure that literacy skills and methodologies build evenly within and across stages.

Project Support

Margo Williamson, Principal Education Officer, 5–14 Curriculum and Assessment, has recently taken over as project manager for Building Bridges in Literacy P6–S2. Currently on secondment from her substantive post as lecturer in primary education and language 5–14 at the University of Dundee, Margo brings her research knowledge and varied teaching experience to this new role. For the past year Margo has been working closely with Norman Emerson, Principal Education Officer, managing and developing the Assessment is for Learning (AifL) programme in Scotland. Her main aim is to use the model of the AifL programme to support the work already started in Building Bridges in Literacy P6–S2 to provide a project which is supportive, innovative and enabling to all those who are involved.



Margo Williamson, Project Manager

Development Officers

Learning and Teaching Scotland is looking for two development officers for Literacy and Building Bridges in Literacy. These posts are to provide support for educational authorities and schools as they take forward the national initiative to raise attainment in literacy.

The posts are for a period of 12 months as fixed term or secondment.

See the LT Scotland website www.LTScotland.org.uk for further details.



Travel and Make the Road: Moving Forward Together

On 3–4 June 2004 a number of delegates from two national projects, Building Bridges in Literacy and Assessment is for Learning, came together for a two-day conference which considered key aspects in learning and teaching. The title of the conference came from the inspirational ideas of Michael Fullan, who suggests we as practitioners have to 'build our road'. Equally it could have come from the American poet Robert Frost, in *The Road Not Taken*:

*Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,
And sorry I could not travel both
And be one traveller, long I stood
And looked down one as far I could
To where it bent in the undergrowth*

Frost was interested in choices, decisions, directions and reflections. These key themes came up throughout the two days.

The Building Bridges in Literacy delegates came equipped with ideas, resources and anecdotes of their hard work from the previous months. Twenty-nine local authorities offered workshops to allow practitioners the opportunity to 'show and tell' the progress they had made working as associated

schools groups. Reflections, processes and challenges were discussed openly.

*Two roads diverged in a wood, and I -
I took the one less travelled by,
And that has made all the difference.*

Sometimes the most difficult route is not the most appealing. Often it is the most satisfying. By working through the issues in groups, many had not taken easy routes and by agreeing to present to colleagues, again they clearly demonstrated this. Hopefully the groups who presented left with a feeling of encouragement, having reflected on their work and received feedback from a most important group – their peers.

Fullan says, 'the single factor most common to successful change is that relationships improve'.

Although most of the practice shared was 'work in progress' it was evident that a process of working together as librarians and primary and secondary colleagues was going well.

Feedback from the conference suggested that the delegates enjoyed the presenters, Carolyn Hutchinson (SEED) and Joan Mackay. Both offered motivating and interesting presentations which

helped set the conference within the national context. Carolyn gave clear insights into the developmental work carried out by schools engaged in the Assessment is for Learning programme and some of the lessons that could be learned from this. Critically, she reminded delegates:

Learners learn best when they:

- understand clearly what they are trying to learn, and what is expected of them
- are given feedback about the quality of their work, and what they can do to make it better
- are given advice about how to go about making improvements
- are fully involved in deciding what needs to be done next, and who can give them help if they need it.

Joan identified the need to constantly challenge our assumptions of what pupils can do at all stages of schooling. She emphasised the need for practitioners to reflect on their expectations, to acknowledge when these expectations could be higher, and to consistently monitor and review their practice with this in mind. She went on to share a particularly poignant story about working with pupils in a Primary 5 class who analysed and evaluated a short but touching poem by Franta Bass, a Jewish concentration camp detainee. A clear message was left with delegates: allowing pupils opportunities to ask the questions they wanted to ask as a consequence of their engagement with texts was often far more beneficial to learning than constantly determining the interpretation of texts through the overuse of direct teacher intervention.

Some delegates said they would have liked longer workshop sessions, some would have liked shorter workshop sessions, and others thought they were just right. All agreed that Liz Niven's reading of *The New Mannie* was an excellent way to end the conference.

Many delegates attended the dinner at the Marriott Hotel and joined Assessment is for Learning delegates at the SECC the following day. There, further stimulation of ideas and thought came in the form of presentations by Professor Jannette Elwood, Queens University, Belfast, and Dr Gordon Stobart, Institute of Education, London.

Margo Williamson

Principal Education Officer,
5-14 Curriculum and Assessment

The New Mannie

*If ye want a nappy chynged jist gie us a bell,
fir A'm a new mannie, can ye no tell?
A'd've hid ma ain wean if only A couldv'e,
an at the labour the wife says she wished A
would've,
fir then A could've breast fed them, bit A'm
afraid A cannie.
Aye there are some limits tae bein a new
mannie.*

*Bit she's doon the boozier wi her mates the
night.
She's worked aw week so it's only right.
A mean A've had some sleepless nights A'll gie
ye that,
bit ye cannae complain jist look at ma flat.
Spick an span no a bit a stoor in sight,
the washin's aw done. A've been at it aw night.
A'll dae a wee bit ironin, pit oan ma trannie.
Oh, it's no that bad bein a new mannie.*

*Ra morra, she says, A can go wi the lads,
a bevvie, the fitba a wee gemme o cards.
She'll take the wean tae it's gran roon the
street
get oot fir a drink an a wee bite tae eat,
wi some o the lassies she's kent aw her life.
She tells them she's lucky tae be such a wife
wi a new man at hame tae look efter the kid,
she'll mibbe hae anither when we're oot o the
rid.
A'd get a joab if A could bit A cannie,
A'm needit at hame cos A'm a new mannie.*

*She's thinkin o haein a holiday soon-
a week in New York wi her pals fae the toon.
Will A stey at hame wi the wean fir the week?
A wisnae too sure if that wis a cheek,
an takin advantage o me an ma role.
A'm hauf considerin gaun doon the dole,
gettin a joab an ma ain independence,
bit she's says that's jist a load o auld nonsense.
'A don't want ma man workin', she says that A
cannie,
A'm no sure whit tae dae fir A'm a new
mannie.*

From *Stravaigin* by Liz Niven,
published by Canongate



Networking

Area Seminar Report

Another round of professional development seminars has taken place across Scotland with the aim of supporting the Building Bridges in Literacy project by:

- considering the nature and process of evaluation of teaching and learning
- offering delegates the opportunity to reflect on the progress of their own projects and the work of others
- introducing the case study as a product of classroom research.

Run by Learning and Teaching Scotland, these seminars were once again supported by colleagues from HMIE, SEED and university faculties of education, and were overwhelmingly well received.

The seminars built on the tripartite relationship

between policy, research and practice in education. They aimed to work towards a common understanding of the language of evaluation and provided a possible model for an action research case study, based on the needs of the project participants, developed in association with their teams.

A highlight of the seminars was the contributions of practitioners, who spoke from the floor of their key focus, school context and work within the project so far.

If you want to know more about the content of the days, why not visit our website, www.LTScotland.org.uk/buildingbridges, where all the presentations are available to download? You could even consider starting your own action research project. Let us know what you think and how you get on.

Projects in Progress

Members of the project teams are undertaking a classroom-research approach to their projects. They have identified a key focus, relevant to them. They have researched current thinking, and are in the process of trialling new methodologies and forming partnerships with critical friends to identify successful strategies. Teams are at various stages along the road towards writing a case study where their findings will be shared with colleagues in their own schools, in their authorities and nationally.

Ian Bramwell, Social Subjects Teacher at Paible School, Isle of North Uist, Outer Hebrides, writes here of his experiences working on the Building Bridges in Literacy project.

In 2003 I accepted an invitation to join the local Building Bridges in Literacy project. Our group is based on the island of North Uist and consists of primary teachers, an English teacher, the local education officer, the community librarian and myself. In our small island community we have a major advantage because we know each other well.

Our first task was to carry out an audit of P6 to S2 literacy skills. This confirmed a need to improve functional writing skills, especially amongst the boys. Visits to see primary teachers at work, and return visits from them, allowed us to share methods and gave us a greater insight into each other's teaching environments.

As a secondary social subjects specialist I have now found myself drawn into a new world of

functional writing and scaffolding, WILTs and WALTs, traffic lighting and so on, as the group decided to formulate an action plan as a result of the audit.

I have begun to use some of the methods suggested both by my colleagues and as the result of individual research.

How has this benefited my pupils so far?

I introduced writing frames in history classes, which markedly improved the students' note-taking skills. I now use model answers to a much greater degree and pupils use these to identify gaps in their own performance. Less able pupils are now paired with the more able pupils and learn from them.

How has this benefited me?

It's brought a new lease of life to my teaching and motivation.

I have a greater understanding of the work of colleagues **and** I get trips to the mainland!



Pupils' work on display at Building Bridges National Conference

Angus Council is supporting another project where strategies have been trialled to improve reading and writing skills. Mrs Ann Reeve, from Kinloch Primary School in Carnoustie, describes the work in progress.

I visit Primary 7 pupils before the transfer to high school. Pupils often appear anxious that the work will be vastly different and too challenging in S1.

Staff are also concerned that pupils lack adequate reading and writing skills, particularly when dealing with non-fiction.

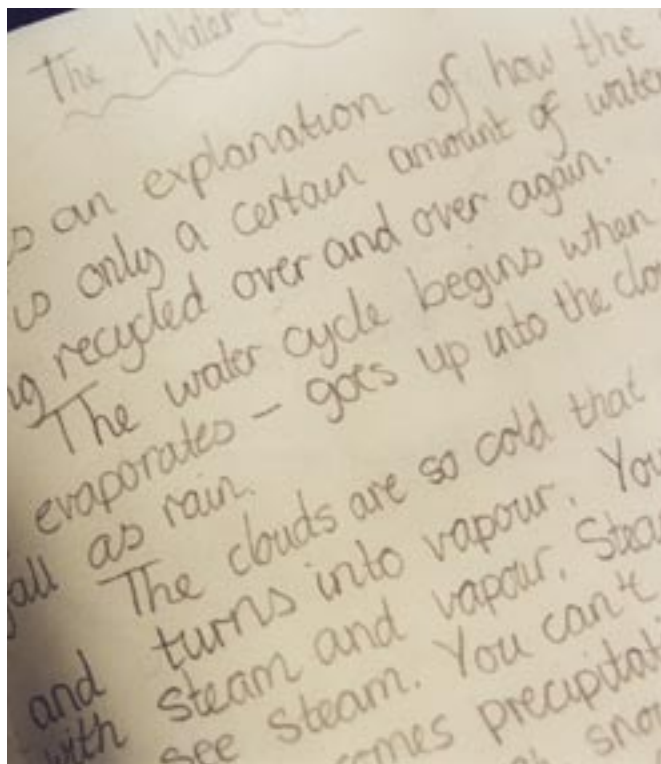
This project has presented us with the opportunity to 'bridge the gap' by developing a reading skills project whereby we can engage pupils in P7 and S1/S2 in thinking about reading and how they might improve their skills in reading for information.

To give this project depth and credibility, a thematic approach exploring World War II was taken. Links were made with the History Department and library at the High School.

Through collaborative planning and reciprocal teaching an ambitious and creative programme of study was developed to include the following:

- The difference between fiction and non-fiction content and layout
- Introduction to the catalogue system (Dewey Decimal System)
- A close look at reference books/encyclopaedias (contents, index, bold numbers and glossary)
- Using keywords
- Developing skimming and scanning skills
- Highlighting and underlining (DARTS)
- Note taking including using bullet points/charts/tables/pictures and flow charts to make notes
- Reporting
- Using the internet
- Cutting and pasting on to a *Word* document
- The use of *PowerPoint* presentations.

Generally since the introduction of this work I have found that the pupils read more actively and with greater purpose. They can survey non-fiction books with skill and can judge which are of value to the tasks set. They also appear to tackle these challenges with greater confidence. I have watched the pupils transfer the reading skills of highlighting and underlining to other reading tasks



Pupils' work on display at Building Bridges National Conference

including National Assessments at C, D and E. On a typical day the photocopier will be overworked as extracts from books are copied to be highlighted, underlined and cut up.

The project has generated enthusiasm in the school to take this into other classes and to develop the existing school library by making further links with the High School librarian and English Department – a welcomed addition to the school development plan for next session.

Building Bridges in Literacy in pupils' learning is being developed in our schools in terms of research skills and using non-fiction material. This needs to be sustained in S1 and S2. Enthusiastic links have been made with secondary staff. So far only one class has been involved in this work but the way forward would be to cascade this initiative throughout the associated schools group. This may allow for some degree of monitoring to assess pupil and teacher success.



Pupils' work on display at Building Bridges National Conference

At **Cardinal Newman High School**, North Lanarkshire, a need was identified to share methodologies for functional writing between primary and secondary schools. Debbie McEachran, an English teacher at Cardinal Newman, writes of her involvement in the project.

Cardinal Newman High School and its five associated primary schools have been working closely together, sharing methodologies and establishing critical friendships through weekly liaison and cooperative teaching and learning.

An audit carried out in each school identified functional writing as an area of the curriculum that required attention. This was to support writing across the curriculum in primary and secondary school.

We set up an associated schools group consisting of the five Primary 7 teachers and myself. Together we produced a set of lessons in functional writing: instructions, letters, news articles and reports. Each lesson comprised methods of learning and teaching such as: modelling texts; pupil conferencing in trios, which takes place before, during and after the planning; writing processes; and increased interaction between teachers and pupils.

We have been following a timetable of lessons throughout the year, in which I visit each Primary 7 for a block of six weekly visits of one and a half hours. Each lesson has been delivered by me and the Primary 7 teacher in a cooperative learning and teaching environment, where pupils are encouraged to write on or label models of texts which were displayed on OHP during whole class discussions. The aims were to encourage greater pupil autonomy over their own work and corrections, thus reducing teacher marking and intervention and the culture of excessive redrafting.

This project has been successful so far, and we aim to widen the scope next year to include all Primary 6 and S1 classes.

Other projects with a focus on writing include Argyll and Bute, South Ayrshire, Clackmannanshire, West Dunbartonshire, Dumfries and Galloway, Inverclyde, South Lanarkshire, Midlothian, Orkney and Renfrewshire.

For a complete list of individual local authority key issues, visit the local authority projects section of the website: www.LTScotland.org.uk/buildingbridges

Sharing the Outcomes

Project participants are embarking on a new phase of their action research, with the emphasis on dissemination. A timeline for progress has been agreed, which will allow ideas to be shared quickly between colleagues.

September 2004	Local authorities to meet, complete case study and identify how they are going to disseminate their work in their local authority.
8 October 2004	All case studies to be completed and sent to LT Scotland.
November 2004 Tuesday 16 November Friday 19 November Tuesday 23 November Friday 26 November	Seminars will be held for peer evaluation of draft case studies. Stirling Management Centre Glasgow Moat House Hotel West Park Centre, Dundee MacDonald Roxburghe Hotel, Edinburgh
February/March 2005	Seminars for development work with local authorities and any newly identified associated schools groups

The Web Resource

The Building Bridges in Literacy P6–S2 project has a dedicated website to support project teams and to disseminate information more widely.

www.LTScotland.org.uk/buildingbridges



Pupils' work on display at Building Bridges National Conference

The Building Bridges in Literacy Discussion Forums

The Building Bridges in Literacy discussion forums have been created as a virtual space where project participants can meet, exchange ideas and thoughts, and share effective practice with colleagues throughout Scotland.

Have you registered yet? All you need is a user name, a password and a working e-mail address. If you have registered then please log in and tell everyone a little about your Building Bridges in Literacy project.

www.LTScotland.org.uk/buildingbridges/discussionforums.asp

Vivian French Live Literature Videoconference Event

On 15 June at 1.45 p.m. children's author and storyteller Vivian French chatted live with schools across Scotland.

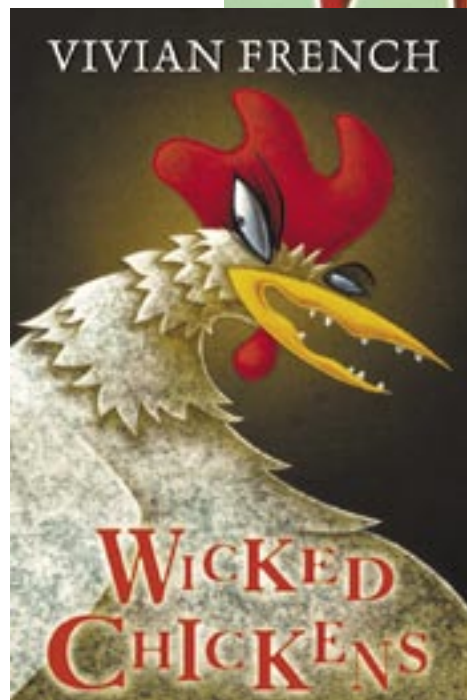
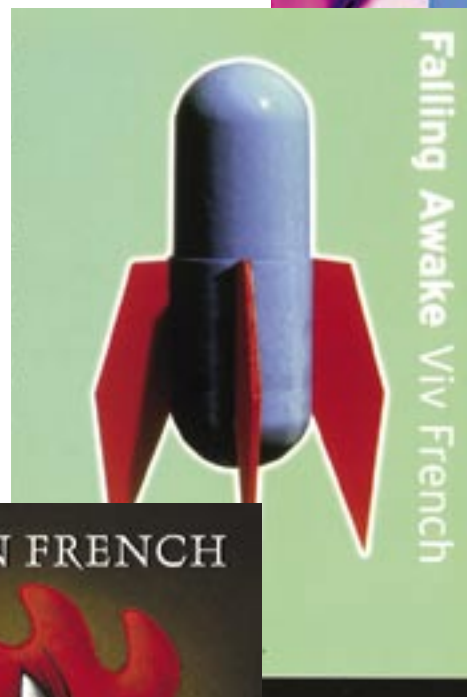
Vivian has been writing for children for more than a decade and telling stories to children in schools and theatres for over 20 years. She has written more than 100 books, including *Aesop's Funky Fables*, *Wicked Chickens*, *The Thistle Princess* and *Hedgehogs Don't Eat Hamburgers*. If your pupils know about Oliver and his encounters with vegetables and fruit, or about Morris the ginger kitten (more food involved), then they know Vivian.

This year Vivian will be the author-in-residence at the Edinburgh International Book Festival.

Live Literature Scotland (LLS) is the new incarnation of the Writers in Scotland scheme through which authors would visit schools to talk about their books and about writing. In collaboration with LLS, the Learning and Teaching Scotland videoconference forum allows authors to reach schools in all corners of Scotland at the same time.

More information on Live Literature Scotland can be found on the Scottish Book Trust website:

www.scottishbooktrust.com/scottishwriters



To find out more about videoconferencing and for details of how your school could join in with future events see: www.LTScotland.org.uk/videoconferencing

Your views – contact us

We've outlined some aspects of the Building Bridges in Literacy P6–S2 project managed by Learning and Teaching Scotland. Now we would welcome some feedback. Please contact us via the website, www.LTScotland.org.uk/buildingbridges, or write to:

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