

Creativity Confidence and Challenge

The Write Team Research Report

£Bath festivals

By not paying attention to the core stories of our students' lives, we miss reading the space where they truly experience growth. To reach this space we must access where our students make meaning. It is a complicated process that requires paying attention to the whole self, not just to the cognitive domain.

It requires paying attention to what Jane Roland calls the three C's of care, concern and connection.

*Jaylynne N. Hutchinson
Students in the Margins*

[We need to provide] the conditions that enable students to secure deep and diverse meaning in their lives. Insofar as we seek to develop the skills for securing such meanings, we must develop multiple forms of literacy. Such meanings do not accrue to the unprepared mind. The task of schools is to provide the conditions that foster the development of such literacy.

*Elliot W. Eisner
Reimagining Schools*

I like the Write Team because they are always nice to us and if we do something wrong they say it's fine. When we went to Prior Park it was amazing, we saw ducks and baby swans and so on. I love poetry now and before I hated it. When we went to the egg [Theatre], performing in front of people was really scary. When you left I was sad because you are very funny. Building my confidence, that's what I loved.

Write Team Pupil



The Write Team: Creativity, Confidence and Challenge

Contents

1. Introduction	4	3.2 Changing Practice	21
<i>Emma Metcalfe, Write Team Project Manager</i>		3.2.1 Teachers as Writers	21
		3.2.2 Learning about Invisible Pupils	24
2. Key Findings	6	3.2.3 Whole School Change	25
<i>Dr Anthony Wilson, Write Team Project Researcher</i>		3.2.4 Resources	27
		3.3 Writer Explorers at Bath Spa University	29
2.1 Pupil Confidence	7	3.3.1 Writing Explorers Rationale	29
2.2 Engagement in Learning	9	3.3.2 The Writing Explorers' Learning Journey	30
2.3 Changing Practice	11	3.3.3 The Impact of Write Team Training at Bath Spa University	30
2.4 Impact of Write Team Training	13	3.4 The Writers	31
		3.4.1 Writers' Identities	31
3. Research Report: Creativity, Confidence and Challenge	15	3.4.2 Writers' Enthusiasm for the Write Team	32
<i>Dr Anthony Wilson, Write Team Project Researcher</i>		3.4.3 Writers' Awareness of the Needs of Invisible Pupils	33
		4. Conclusion	34
3.1 Pupil Confidence and Engagement in Learning	16		
3.1.1 Transfer of Learning	19	Appendix	
3.1.2 Reconceptualisation of Learning	19	Appendix 1. - Research Rationale	38
		Appendix 2. - Teacher Reflections	41
		Appendix 3. - Case Study Interviews with Teachers	44

1. Introduction

Emma Metcalfe

Write Team Project Manager

The Write Team was a creative writing project designed to develop pupil confidence and engagement in their learning. The project, funded by the Paul Hamlyn Foundation brought together an arts organisation, local authority and schools to share experience and skills, in the support of those pupils who *‘play truant in the mind’*.

(Collins. J (1998) Playing Truant in the Mind: the social exclusion of quiet pupils. BERA).

The project aimed to engage pupils *‘who keep a low profile; invisible pupils who are quiet and undemanding’* (*‘Keeping Up’*, DfES, 2007). The project provided a weekly programme of creative writing workshops led by the Project Co-ordinator and developed by writers to engage pupils, develop their confidence, and readiness to write. The Write Team lead teachers attended these weekly workshops, and used reflective diaries to record both their own creative writing and thoughts on writing and impact of the teaching of writing.

Eleven schools took part, eager to use the project to address the *‘guilt that the majority of teachers have about those pupils whose name they still do not know in the fourth week of term’* (*Write Team lead teacher*) and five of these schools took part in the project for more than one year. In a local authority with high achieving schools, this project focused on a key area for the Local Authority School Improvement Team, namely how to support pupils who were not achieving their potential.

The programme of weekly workshops were developed into schemes of work by professional writers: poets, novelists, sports writers and dramatists. The aim of the scheme of work was to provide creative activities for the pupils to enjoy and activities that the teachers could incorporate into their teaching practice and share with colleagues. A writer also visited each school every term to work with the Write Team pupils and lead teachers who, by the time the writers arrived, were already accustomed to creative writing:

‘It means they (the pupils and teachers) are ready to explore new ways of approaching writing and understand there’s a different, artistic, way of thinking about the art. When we arrive they are ready to really stretch themselves and step into the imaginative and unknown.’

Mandy Coe, Write Team Poet.

The writers also led INSET sessions with Write Team Lead Teachers to support them in the development of their own creative writing and teaching practice. *'The schools and teachers were supportive of the project because they felt that it was trying to improve and support their practice'. Metcalfe, E & Oliver, M Engaging Teachers, NAWA Magazine Issue Number 46, Autumn 2008, ISSN 1361-8539*

The project was structured to support both the development of pupil confidence, and creative teaching practice in the classroom. The weekly visits created the space and time for teachers to reflect on their practice over a sustained period of time. Through an informal action research cycle in which the teachers reviewed the writing session, tried out ideas in the classroom and discussed what worked and what did not, teachers were able to explore what interested them and share ideas for further development. This meant the workshops were not only valuable to the English departments or Literacy Coordinators, but often to the whole school.

From the first there was excitement at the potential for change *'as teachers, pupils and writers were all learning from each other. Indeed the roles tended to be reversed as the teacher was learning, the pupils were writing and the writer was teaching. At the beginning of the workshop everyone was excited by the novelty and unexpected nature of what was going to happen next!'* Write Team lead teacher.

This spirit of change led to new collaborations with local partnership agencies that both extended the pupils' experience and disseminated the good practice developed by the Write Team.

The opportunity to perform at the egg Theatre in Bath led to the development of a drama module that proved pivotal in the development of the pupils' confidence. *'It has helped me with my school work a lot and that is great. It has changed my way about talking out loud and speaking to an audience. I now like acting and drama and it has changed the way I think about everything to do with English and writing. This has improved my confidence in speaking aloud, before I had stage fright.'* Write Team pupil.

Collaboration with the National Trust provided pupils with the opportunity to explore and write with experts outside the classroom at a National Trust property. Teachers also took part in an INSET at the property to support them

in using creative writing in a wide variety of locations outside school. *'Just being outside brought all the activities alive and made me realise the hundreds of possibilities for lessons...they wrote some really super poetry.'* Write Team teacher.

Write Team pupils gained a taste of working in a real world context: writing for a professionally designed publication and performing at Bath Literature Festival, while relationships brokered by Bath Festivals gave teachers the opportunity to work with writers in inspiring spaces: No.1 The Royal Crescent, Radio Graphic Design Offices - a converted pharmacy with an in-house cinema and a National Trust Property.

The project outcomes were further achieved through the Write Team's contribution to PSHE delivery within Bath & North East Somerset (B&NES). The Write Team coordinators led creative writing workshops for Personal, Social, Health and Economic (PSHE) Leaders and 166 pupils as part of the PSHE Themes: self-awareness, identity, relationships and empathy. The impact of this collaboration was extended through Bath Literature Festival's Young Writers' Competition entitled 'Risk' with 204 entries. A Write Team scheme of work of short writing activities was developed and used by form tutors during tutor time.

Demonstrable commitment to the Write Team was given by Bath Spa University's Initial Teacher Training Department who invited the project to work over two years with 754 of their Initial Teacher Trainees, developing both awareness of the invisible pupil and the skills developed by the Write Team to support these pupils through creative writing.

This report is the story of what happened and what we learnt.

2. Key Findings

Dr Anthony Wilson

Write Team Project Researcher

'I've learnt to be more confident with my ideas, because sometimes you have an idea that you just sort of hide away, because you think no one will like it, but this has taught me that even if no one likes it, you won't know till you've asked.'

Write Team pupil

The key outcomes of the Write Team project were:

- *Pupils show more interest in, and are more engaged in learning across the curriculum;*

- *Pupils increase their involvement in other school activities as a result of being involved with the Write Team;*

- *Institutional-level changes in practice become evident in participating schools showing an increased awareness of, and support, for invisible pupils;*

- *Impact of Writing Team training is shared across non-participating schools within the Local Authority and beyond.*

This report is based on data gathered and analysed 2009 - 2011

2.1 Pupil Confidence

'I have been more confident with my work. (Now) I say my ideas even if they might not be right.'

Write Team pupil.

Key Findings

- In Year 1 - 86% of pupils made a link between a change in their perception of themselves (e.g. 'improving', 'getting better', 'more enjoyment', 'better at learning', using 'before and after' statements) and participation in Write Team activities .
- In Year 2 - 70% of comments made by pupils made a link between a change in their perception of themselves (e.g. 'improving', 'getting better', 'more enjoyment', 'better at learning', using 'before and after' statements) and participation in Write Team activities.
- In Year 2 - 87% of comments by teachers about their pupils made a link between increase in confidence and engagement with learning to participation in Write Team activities.

Evidence to support increased pupil confidence was drawn from letters written by pupils to authors at the end of each cycle of the Write Team as well as interviews and end of term questionnaires, together with teachers' interviews and pen portraits of their pupils.

Pupils consistently commented that they had gained confidence through participation in Write Team activities:

- where they had been set challenges, including working with new people:

'I've learnt to write up plays, to think of new ideas and work in teams, and work with people you don't usually work with.'

Write Team pupil.

- where they had been trusted to come up with new ideas and artefacts:

'[Now I have] more ideas, I'm better at poetry and better at thinking on the spot.'

Write Team pupil.

- where they had been given the opportunities to learn and practice new skills:

'I have gained confidence in my writing, I have done drama that I never would have done before, and I have learned poetry skills, more than I could possibly say in this size box. I would have never acted on stage before the Write Team arrived.'

Write Team pupil.

Pupils consistently commented that they had enjoyed:

- gaining confidence through working in new social groups:

'[The things I enjoyed were] listening to everybody's ideas and being proud of my own work. [My confidence grew from] reading out my work and being noticed in the group.'

Write Team pupil.

- gaining increased confidence in their abilities as writers:

'The classes were great and helped my confidence levels. I liked writing poetry about senses. I have learnt about how to edit out the rubbish parts of my writing and be more selective about what I write. Before the Write Team I would not have taken part in theatre projects or plays.'

Write Team pupil.

- gaining increased confidence in the subject of drama:

'It helped me to speak a bit more in English and to people: when we went to the egg together I learnt to think out of the box and to speak louder. I used to be the quiet one.'

Write Team pupil.

- gaining increased confidence as learners:

'I've learned how to think more outside the box, how to be more creative with my writing and to be more active in school, reading, and writing and speaking out loud.'

Write Team pupil.

'The Write Team has benefited not only the students in developing their confidence and self esteem, but also given staff some great ideas for working on 'knowledge transformation', eg having students write poems to explain elements of science or coming up with metaphors to understand features of geography or maths. Perhaps the greatest measure of success is that, without fail, every group that has participated in the Write Team has wanted to carry on with it the next year; even those children who had hoped not to be noticed'

Head Teacher from Write Team School .



2.2 Engagement in Learning

'Since the Write Team I feel more confident at thinking and writing at different times because the Write Team has taught me different ways of thinking up ideas when I'm stuck with my work'.

Write Team pupil.

Key Findings

- In Year 1 & 2 58% of pupils made a link between participation in Write Team activities and an increase in their engagement in other learning activities.
- In letters to authors written by pupils the most consistently mentioned aspect of 'improvement' was the growth and development of personal confidence in learning through creative writing and drama activities.
- In pupils' letters to authors there is strong evidence to suggest that they have benefited from being challenged to use new habits of mind, and that practising these has resulted in a transformation of self-perception and perception of the subjects they have participated in.
- Attendance at Write Team sessions was consistently high. However 18% of pupils dropped out of the Write Team in one school that offered an extensive range of enrichment activities, in a school with markedly less enrichment provision there was 100% attendance.

Evidence for achieving this outcome can be found in the letters of pupils to authors written in Year 1 and Year 2.

Pupils consistently commented that they had:

- gained confidence from Write Team activities to participate in school life:

'I have concentrated more in lessons. Also I have started to write outside school and it has really widened my imagination. I have really liked the Write Team because I have felt more comfortable about writing generally. I feel more comfortable in lessons, and I feel I can understand more and engage more with conversations...But most of all I have loved writing poems, so much so, I have started to write my own.'

Write Team pupil.

- gained confidence from Write Team activities to work in contexts outside of school:

'I now feel more confident in my writing skills –whether it's writing at home for pleasure or writing for learning at school.'

Write Team pupil.

- changed their attitude towards writing as a result of participating in Write Team activities:

'[The Write Team] has given me more confidence and inspired me to write more poems and songs. And writing is more interesting to me than before, when I didn't like literacy much. Also writing assessments are my favourite assessments, my writing skills have improved.'

Write Team pupil.

- gained creative habits of mind which could be applied to learning across the curriculum:

'I liked how it didn't matter if we made a mistake and we could just use it in our own way. It was nice to write and not worry about muddling things up, it just made the work more interesting. I wrote a poem where I used the word cloud with the description of a tree.'

Write Team pupil.

- gained an improved self-image as a result of participating in Write Team activities:

'I have more confidence in myself in front of people.'

Write Team pupil.



2.3 Changing Practice

'We are much more aware of invisible pupils now. We spend time each day to make 'learning inspirational' and to build talk time in and out of lessons'.

Write Team lead teacher.

Key findings

- Whole school change took place in three of the eleven schools this included whole staff cross-curricular training and implementation of creative writing practice and strategies to support invisible pupils.
- In ten of the eleven participating Write Team schools schemes of work were incorporated into departmental and whole school teaching plans.
- In seven of the eleven schools Write Team practice is continued through Writing Clubs.

Evidence for achievement of this outcome was found in the teachers reflective journals, responses of teachers and trainee teachers to Write Team training and conferences together with interviews and presentations given by teachers.

Teachers consistently commented that working alongside creative writers and writer educators had:

- changed their perception of the profile and learning behaviours of invisible pupils:

'I have seen children with really low levels of literacy come up with amazing turns of phrase, similes, metaphors etc – often just one line or phrase in a whole page. These moments can take your breath away and really give the student a sense of being a writer when they have always thought of themselves as "not very good" at writing.'

Write Team lead teacher.

- heightened their awareness of the profile of invisible pupils:

'The Write Team has greatly increased my awareness of invisible pupils. It has made me think more about the pupils as individuals and putting more work into getting through to the pupils. I invest more time in them.'

Write Team lead teacher.

- developed their understanding of how to teach creative writing:

'There are many ways in which I have changed my practice, from improving my questioning skills; thinking about tying in children's own experiences into non-fiction writing; the use of little bursts of writing warm-ups; using visual props for descriptive writing as well as having a different coloured pen to channel their thoughts.'

Write Team lead teacher.

However some teachers did find the focus within the Write Team on Speaking and Listening challenged their definition of a positive learning environment:

'At times it was too noisy...I found it hard not to intervene, as I have been a teacher so long, it was hard not to want them to stop, but then they did make progress.'

Write Team lead teacher.

- developed their understanding of creativity in its widest sense:

'As a subject leader, my confidence and understanding of good practice and varying techniques has changed significantly. It has also raised my profile as a literacy leader having taken over from the previous deputy head. This has allowed me to take ownership of the subject and lead it with much greater assurance than I had previously.'

Write Team lead teacher.

Teachers consistently commented that participating in the Write Team had enabled them to:

- re-evaluate their teaching of creative writing:

'Children need time to think through their ideas, time to use their senses, to appreciate their environment, to observe, to notice, to think about what they are going to write. They also need time to make links and connections between everyday life, their own experience and what they are going to write.'

Write Team lead teacher.

- re-evaluate whole school policy (e.g. on invisible pupils; on the teaching of writing) through staff meetings and in-service training:

'We are now more aware of the kinds of learning activities which support invisible children:

- *reading aloud;*
- *thinking time;*
- *small focused tasks/exercises;*
- *group activities half way through the lesson when the children are thinking.'*

Write Team lead teacher.

- modify whole school practice through sharing of Write Team materials and resources through staff meetings and in-service training.



2.4 Impact of Write Team Training

'The Write Team is massively responsible for the change in our school. Just to have the opportunity to sit in on the writing lessons and observe what Emma is doing is so valuable. It allows you to reflect on what you do and how you can change it.'

Write Team lead teacher.

Key findings

- Five of the eleven Write Team schools have shared practice, resources and findings with other schools and teachers.
- The Write Team has been responsible for delivering training to 1391 other participants at INSET, Local Authority training, conferences, and workshops.
- Research knowledge generated by the Write Team is currently used by two universities as part of their initial teacher training.
- Write Team practice disseminated at a national level through conferences and publications.

Evidence for achieving this outcome can be found in the evaluative comments made by participants at training sessions and in follow-up statements and interviews about the training they received.

Teachers, trainee teachers and other professionals consistently remarked on the high quality of Write Team training. They noted that the ideas and activities:

- enabled them to re-evaluate their own practice:

'Previously, I would expect that a short introduction to the activity and a quick talk between the pupils and me was enough to get their imaginations flowing. By taking more time to talk about and carry out the activity in more depth, and using props or visuals to stimulate the discussion, a more individual and interesting piece of work is created.'

Trainee teacher, Bath Spa University.

- offered them a model of good practice which they wanted to emulate:

'You cannot underestimate the change in approach and attitude in the children. The focus and attention to detail they needed to engage fully with the project has impacted on all aspects of their learning. And as a teacher I have learned so much from the Write Team. There are all the obvious elements, for example the ideas from the schemes of work, teaching techniques etc. However it was the more subtle aspects that started becoming key - little things about how certain questioning techniques brought out the best in certain children.'

Write Team lead teacher.

- gave them an accessible and adaptable repertoire of ideas and resources:

'Conversations with the Bath Spa teachers revealed that collaborating with the Write Team gave them confidence in themselves as writers and consequently in their ability to inspire and motivate children to write. They spoke of being inspired by the team's passion and belief in creative writing, gaining many ideas to use in the classroom to stimulate children. Their training increased confidence in teachers' ability to be creative and to support creativity in others.'

Tutor, Bath Spa University.

- challenged them to change their teaching of creative writing:

'I have learnt that it is not my job to change a pupil's thoughts. It is more to ask questions about their ideas to allow them to go on their own journey of discovery and answer questions which then leads them to ask questions of their own and their writing. This seems to really foster a willingness to redraft, to tweak and improve their writing. I always tried to steer their writing too much, before. Now they own it rather than me.'

Write Team lead teacher.

- challenged them to reconsider the inclusivity of their practice regarding invisible pupils:

'Since the Write Team I try to be more open to choosing any pupil to work with. The children know the good writers in the class and if you use the less acknowledged writers, they enjoy that. I am now more confident to find the good in all the pupils' writing, rather than focusing on the good or 'safe' pupils. That means the world to them. I am more open to every child in the class.'

Write Team lead teacher.



3. Research Report

Dr Anthony Wilson, Write Team Project Researcher

'The Write Team gives you a chance to find new friends.. The thing that I like about the Write Team is that it is such an amazing place to be very homely and loving.'

Write Team pupil.

The Write Team involved:

- A weekly programme of creative writing workshops led by the Project Co-ordinator and developed by writers to engage pupils, develop their confidence, and readiness to write. Write Team lead teachers attended these weekly workshops, and used reflective diaries to record both their own creative writing and thoughts on writing and impact of the teaching of writing.
- Termly INSET sessions led by the Write Team writers for all teachers involved in the project and other teachers throughout the local authority.
- Eleven Schools: five secondary and six primary schools.
- Eleven Writers from a variety of genres including: fiction, poetry, drama and sports writing who developed creative writing schemes of work and led workshops with pupils and teachers.
- Creative writing workshops for thirty Initial Teacher Trainees from Bath Spa University led by Write Team creative practitioners.
- Nine placements for students from Bath Spa University MA in Creative Writing for Young people to shadow sessions in order to develop their skills as writers and educators.

The report rationale and methodology can be found in appendix 1.

3.1 Pupil Confidence and Engagement in Learning

Evidence for this chapter has been drawn from the Write Team pupils' letters to the author, pupil questionnaires at the beginning, middle, and end of the project and Teachers' Reflective Journals (See appendix 3)

At the end of Year 1 and Year 2 pupils were given the opportunity to write letters to the authors they had worked with. Writer educator Karl Bevis explains the rationale and dissemination of this exercise:

'The children were very much given free reign on what they wrote in their letters. The task was a real one, as it was made clear that whoever they wrote to would receive this letter, which lifted them from just being 'yet another evaluation form' type activity. These letters therefore also act as a useful tool for evaluation. In keeping with other Write Team tasks the young people had a suitable scaffold for writing, but with full writing freedom within that scaffold. The structure was to write a letter of thanks to any one of the authors responsible for the writing tasks they had been involved in. The scope included the chance to write in detail about the work, to write in general terms about what they felt about the project and to write as much or as little as they wished.'

Data from these letters has been vital in demonstrating an increase in pupil confidence and engagement as a result of participating in Write Team activities (see Key Findings). How these pupils' views about themselves and their learning came to change as a result of the Write Team is explored below.

The overwhelming message contained in the letters which pupils wrote to the authors they worked with was that their confidence had increased as a result of working with the Write Team.

Pupils were able to take the creative habits of mind shown to them by the writers and apply them in other, sometimes less formal, contexts

'I have learnt a lot about writing. It has made me think more about writing. I now write in my spare time. It makes some of my homework easier!...It has made me more confident in my learning log.'

Write Team pupil.

What is especially pleasing to note is that these comments reflect a mixture of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation

'I've learnt to be more confident with my ideas, because sometimes you have an idea that you just sort of hide away, because you think no one will like it, but this has taught me that even if no one likes it, you won't know till you've asked.'

Write Team pupil.

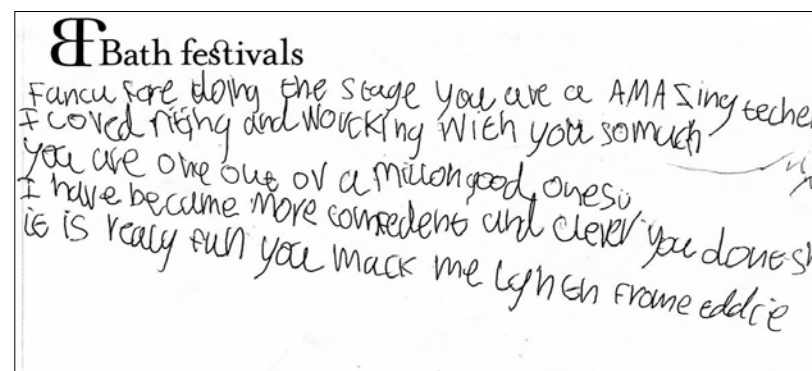
Confidence gained has been a spur to learning in collaborative and social ways

'You doing acting with us [...] has helped me a lot [with] my own acting outside school. Making up plays at home, writing down scripts for my friend. And I do it for fun.'

Write Team pupil.

Writing was associated with pleasure: 'for the joy of [it], not just because I'm told to'. The following quotations are a sample of remarks which testify to how the Write Team has boosted confidence on a personal level for children:

Some of the most moving statements of increased confidence were made in the most faltering of handwriting:



'Writing the poems with you has built my confidence a lot. I talk out loud now.'
Write Team pupil.

The following quotations are all from the teachers' journals. They are 'pen portraits' of pupils, written at the end of a year of Write Team lessons, and paint a clear picture of the growth in confidence of participating pupils:

'J is often confident in class discussions but can lack confidence as a writer as he can find it hard to develop his imaginative responses. The Write Team has helped him to both enjoy writing for pleasure and to give him the confidence to explore his imagination...'

'Often a reluctant writer who 'hates English', but have seen a real improvement in attitude both at home and school. Mum over the moon with his new positive attitude to writing and he is actually enjoying it! Has written songs in his spare time and has just embarked on a story writing competition. Still quiet in class but will contribute with some encouragement!'

Write Team lead teacher.

It is important to note that pupils with different abilities and backgrounds within the lead teacher's school benefited from the Write Team. The following two quotations give an indication of the range of participating pupils and of how the Write Team project has been able to successfully meet their varying needs:

'Very able writer, happy to contribute to class discussions and a confident writer. The Write Team has really pushed F and challenged him. He has produced writing of an excellent quality and enjoys writing creatively...'

'R has an IEP and is mildly dyslexic. R finds the writing down of her ideas challenging but has been inspired by the Write Team, particularly the poetry and drama sessions. She is more likely to give her writing a go and is often keen to share her work.'

Write Team lead teacher.

The following quotations are from another journal. It is important to note that these all relate to one child, in one class within the project and can thus be seen as evidence of the journal as a record of the pupils' developing confidence over

time. What is especially interesting about this record of progress is that it is placed within the context of pupils' growth in confidence overall:

10/09/09

J –Switched off

17/09/09

J – Far more interactive this week.

24/09/09

J is shy. EM has to read his work out for him.

15/10/09

J –also did not want to take part to start with but his own poem about Horrid Henry was read with confidence.

J –Very interested and on the ball –was appointed 'poetry policeman' –not allowed to use pupils' first suggestions.

26/11/09

Once they got started and J was given reassurance it was hard to stop him writing.

Spring Term

The children have really come on and are enthusiastic and far more confident now at reading out their work in front of both the teacher/adult and each other. J [is] far more interactive and listens well, often raising his hands [to speak].

Although not all the children's levels have moved in writing, confidence and willingness to participate in whole class lessons [is] now hugely improved.

Even though some children are still quiet... [They are] no longer afraid to come forward and offer their input during whole class sessions. They all seem to value their own input.

J makes really valuable comments now where once he said 'silly' things and was embarrassed to contribute.'

Write Team lead teacher.

In another journal we read the following portraits of pupils as they approach the end of their participation with the Write Team. It is important to note that the teacher has commented not only on a change in these pupils' confidence in the subject of writing, but has also noted a transformation in some of their learning behaviour overall. Teachers who attended the conference and end of year focus group ratified these observations, clearly identifying the intervention of the Write Team as the major contributing factor in the change in these pupils' lives:

'T: Really lacked confidence to put her ideas down onto paper. Class teacher has noticed a real difference in the amount of writing she puts down now and how she can settle down straightaway for the majority of the time.'

'A: Shows some interesting ideas with lovely turns of phrases. She seems to have developed her own writing style although she still sometimes goes off topic with irrelevant details. She is showing more confidence as the year has progressed.'

'M: Has become more confident and proactive over the year, in the contributions in class as well as how she speaks to other children. She really enjoys her writing now and is more enthusiastic to share her work in front of the class.'

'J: He has grown in confidence with himself, his writing and his ideas. He has also become better with his marking of punctuation.'

Write Team lead teacher.

One of the most pleasing aspects to read in the journals kept by teachers is the way they describe changes in pupil behaviour and engagement over time. The following remarks, noted as the teachers observed Write Team Writers and Project Coordinators working with their pupils, make visible the otherwise overlooked moments of change in individual pupils' lives which have been initiated by the Write Team and recorded by the people who know them best:

'Pupils have become very good at organising themselves –much more independent... Pupils talk more while doing tasks –learning from each other and refining their ideas. Talk does not have to be a bad thing as it is in many lessons.'

'SM really responding well –really brought them out of themselves, fantastic to see them interacting with each other and other adults in such a confident way...N comments on positive communication skills such as: good eye-contact, speed, focus, etc.'

'S really animated, acting out his ideas! It's great to see him becoming increasingly confident. He is literally breathless in his need to put forward his ideas.'

All quotes from same Write Team lead teacher.

What is important to note in these remarks is the link that the teachers make between the Write Team 'style' of teaching and the increased confidence shown by pupils. For some pupils merely having the opportunity to work in a small group made them feel noticed and 'special'. Others noted that the chance to work on their writing with writers over sustained periods of time allowed them to 'go beyond' themselves, with the result that they were surprised at how much they achieved across the whole curriculum (e.g. speaking and listening) and in learning activities outside of school altogether.

3.1.1 Transfer of Learning

In the letters that pupils wrote to the authors they had worked with there was a consistent emphasis on the impact of the Write Team on aiding and encouraging pupils to learn in other contexts. For example, there are frequent mentions of taking ‘ideas’ and ‘skills’ from Write Team lessons and using them, in other lessons in school, comments which talk about learning in this way have been categorised as ‘Transfer of Knowledge’. In each of the quotations below there is a palpable sense of pupils having gained in confidence as part of the Write Team which is now being replicated in other less formal contexts.

‘I have concentrated more in lessons. Also I have started to write outside school and it has really widened my imagination. I have really liked the Write Team because I have felt more comfortable about writing generally. I feel more comfortable in lessons, and I feel I can understand more and engage more with conversations...But most of all I have loved writing poems, so much so, I have started to write my own.’

Write Team pupil.

‘The Write Team has made me feel good when I do English at school and at home.’

Write Team pupil.

On occasions the change in perception about the subject of writing denotes a change in self-perception at the same time:

‘My confidence has increased ten-fold. Before this I was uncertain and, whilst I could write, I couldn’t refine my work. But now thanks to the Write Team, I feel so much better about what I can write and how I write it.’

Write Team pupil.

‘I have learnt a lot about writing. It has made me think more about writing.’

Write Team pupil.

3.1.2 Reconceptualisation of Learning

‘I think the Write Team has really made me think more about different creative ways to write. I feel more inspired to write more often for the joy of writing, not just because I’m told to.’

Write Team pupil.

As important as the evidence of learning being transferred from one context to another are the following comments which show signs of learning being thought about from a new standpoint. These have been categorised as ‘reconceptualising learning’. Many build on the picture presented above, of pupils engaging in creative activities for their own (i.e. intrinsic) sake. There is a sense of increased resilience in these comments and a sense of pupils expressing how they now see the subject of English/literacy differently:

‘Since I’ve been at Write Team I feel more confident at thinking and writing at different times because Write Team has taught me different ways of thinking up ideas when I’m stuck with my work.’

Write Team pupil.

In the following quotations the line between a change in perception of the subject and of the self is very blurred, indicating the holistic nature of the teaching strategies and inputs at the Write Team:

‘I liked how it didn’t matter if we made a mistake and we could just use it in our own way. It was nice to write and not worry about muddling things up. It just made the work more interesting. I wrote a poem where I used the word cloud with the description of a tree.’

Write Team pupil.

In the following quotations there is a sense that the Write Team has helped the child develop creative habits of mind which build confidence in writing and beyond the subject of English:

'The Write Team has improved me at school because... when I do literacy in class I write a lot more and I remember all the things at the Write Team we do. The Write Team is good because nothing is right or wrong, just get it down on paper and write like a professional writer. It has made me more confident, just write as much as you can.'

Write Team pupil.

'I have loved the Write Team because I can look at things or pictures and I can see different things in them. I like writing anything if it is sad or it's happy. Write Team has helped me speak up and have more ideas in class and has given me more imagination.'

Write Team pupil.

The pupils' letters to the authors and the questionnaires speak directly and consistently about the difference the Write Team has made to their lives:

- The growth and development of personal confidence in learning, in both writing and speaking and listening.
- Pupils able to transfer knowledge developed in The Write Team to other contexts.
- Pupils use creative habits of mind to re-evaluate what they think about both themselves as learners and the subjects concerned.

The impact of the Write Team can therefore be said to be twofold: it changes how learners see themselves, and causes them to act and think differently.

The perspective of teachers is equally powerful. They consistently note that the Write Team has had an impact on pupils in palpable changes of behaviour. One teacher spoke at the summer conference of a child who had never spoken in class now organising her peers in group activities. They also spoke of their pupils' ability to voice questions and give answers, of their new-found enthusiasm for writing and performing for class and school assemblies, always having seen it as the preserve of more 'confident' pupils. One lead teacher

identified a previously silent pupil who asked her (in her job interview with the school council for the post of Deputy Head): 'If you walk past us in the corridor, do you feel you are more important than us?' She reported this to be the most difficult question she faced that day.

The teachers who were directly involved in the Write Team however, are unhesitating in their view that the Write Team has had an impact on pupil confidence: in the way they perceive themselves as learners both in and out of school, and in the way that they express this confidence in observable behaviours not formerly witnessed in either context.



3.2 Changing Practice

Evidence for this chapter has been drawn from Teachers' Reflective Journals, Write Team end of year conferences, feedback from Write Team training and INSET sessions and case studies with teachers (See Appendix 3)



3.2.1 Teachers as Writers

It is clear in the comments presented below that the Write Team has had a marked impact on the practice of all the participating teachers and schools. They report that as a result of their participation they are now more willing to take risks in their practice, not for its own sake, but to promote the creative habits of mind which they have seen so powerfully modelled in front of them. They report that this in turn has an impact on the way their pupils perceive both them and their teaching.

It was noted from a reading of the research evidence that two important concerns were referred to on a regular basis: the difference between teachers and writers in their approach to teaching writing; and the need to define observable behaviours of progress in terms of pupil confidence in school.

A strong theme of the journals and other feedback from sessions is the observation that writers teach writing differently from teachers. The following observations provide evidence of teachers attempting to tease out these differences for themselves:

The lessons are more 'pupil-centred' less teacher-led. Less rigidity allows for teacher to use professional judgment about value of tasks –how long [is] needed etc...

The pupils seem to thrive when 'trusted' to work independently...

'[It has] really made me think about how I teach writing. Brilliant practical ideas which can be worked into anything e.g. vocabulary alphabet exercise.'

Write Team lead teacher.

What is interesting to note in the following statements by teachers is the way that writers have an 'inclusive' way of working with children, in that they are accepting of a process which includes being open to and making links between a full range of comments by children, not being distracted by concerns of classroom management, while also working at pace, pushing and expecting children to come up with ideas and suggestions:

'[Karl says] 'Don't write the poem from beginning to end, write it as you get your ideas.' This was modelled by Karl. I like this and should do more of this with my class.'

Write Team lead teacher.

'It was amazing how quickly a piece of shared writing was produced. All the children's ideas were encouraged and used. Clearly many had no concerns as to what the children might say or not say.'

Write Team lead teacher.

'I like how Karl links what they say to something else –even if he wasn't planning it! As ever, he encourages everything that is said by everyone no matter how 'off track' it is!'

Write Team lead teacher.

The question of 'pace' is an interesting one, as it can be over-associated with rapidity. Undeniably in these comments there is a sense of purpose and a charged atmosphere, with many pupils taking part. In the following comment, however, there is also recognition that 'pace' is about depth of concentration and quality of thinking:

'I love Karl's pace of lessons – I need to slow down –it's then that you get the quality of teaching and learning.'

Write Team lead teacher.

Teachers also reflected on the writer's command of the teaching situation and their trust in their own ability to bring forth work of quality from the pupils. There are 'no concessions':

'DG [sports writer] makes no concessions to the fact that a) these are 12/13 year old children and b) all girls.'

Write Team lead teacher.

Games and activities are often made increasingly challenging for the pupils, part of which is the emphasis on the social aspects of learning such as co-operation:

'N is working with groups to try and 'splice' all of their ideas together. She emphasizes the need to work together –not in competition with each other.'

Write Team lead teacher.

On one occasion in the journals there is a sense of the teacher's own preconceptions about teaching knowledge being subtly challenged. In the following two examples there is a tacit appreciation of the difference between how writers and teachers teach writing:

'I love the way Karl reads poems – he brings them alive and throws his whole body and voice into the poem. He also pauses before and after reading to give the chance for the children (and him) to think and reflect.'

Write Team lead teacher.

'Personal thought: the children are given more ownership over their work. [It is] not marked, rarely corrected. Does this impact more on their ability to write and be creative than correction or being asked to edit and correct their work? Also, the lack of focus on handwriting and presentation, no WALT (What I'm Learning Today) or WILF (What I'm Looking For), it's very different from normal lessons: is it more productive?'

Write Team lead teacher.

It is possible to interpret these remarks as pointing out a difference between writers' and teachers' knowledge. It is important to note that this is not merely a question of subject knowledge, but one of performance knowledge. The poem being read out is delivered in a very physical performance which also includes a very subtle use of silence. We can interpret these remarks as implicitly noting how the writer takes risks, both in terms of what he puts into the lesson (physicality) and what he omits ('normal' signposting such as WALT and WILF statements). That the writer is prepared to bring less emphasis in his teaching to the accepted codes of teaching practice appears to result in a freeing up of thinking time and in 'productivity'.

In the following extracts the risk that the writer takes is of maintaining high expectations, trusting that their instructions have been sufficient even though they are challenging:

‘The children suggested words to Karl which were associated with snow. Karl scribed these onto the whiteboard. There were about 15 words. Karl then drew a line under the words congratulating them but saying ‘We are writing a poem for someone who has never seen snow before, so we are not allowed to use these words.’

Write Team lead teacher.

‘It’s a great idea to get the children thinking really deeply. They coped very well with this.’

Write Teacher lead teacher.

What is notable in the response of the children to these interventions is that they not only appear to ‘cope’ with what is required of them but that they appear to thrive in these new conditions:

‘The progress we have seen in the children has been mainly due to the Write Team. It has had a big impact in terms of our teaching of poetry, and generally our approach to creativity, being more open. The pupils now have more confidence in writing poems and in their creativity. The staff have noticed the Write Team style of teaching, accepting everything, where all ideas are valid. As a result, the children put more of themselves in their writing.’

Write Team lead teacher.

The teachers all commented that having the opportunity to observe professional writers and writer educators had:

- imparted to them a new attitude and impetus towards teaching creative writing - using a wider variety of strategies and openness to new ideas.
- encouraged focus on process not product.
- encouraged a wider use of a variety of strategies to teach writing.

One teacher in particular emphasised the way that the Write Team had encouraged her to use a wider variety of strategies to teach writing:

‘There are many ways in which I have changed my practice, from improving my questioning skills; thinking about tying in children’s own experiences into non-fiction writing; the use of little bursts of writing warm-ups; using visual

props for descriptive writing as well as having a different coloured pen to channel their thoughts.’

Write Team lead teacher.

It is as though the presence of the creative writers in her classroom has given this teacher permission to try out new teaching ideas, coupled with resilience to see them through in everyday practice.

This sense of permission can also be seen in the following reflection. In it we read of a changed attitude towards the ownership, in terms of content and style, of children’s creative writing. This is evidence of a profound pedagogical shift because it is about a transformation not only of practice, but also of power-relationships:

‘I allow the children to be more original, they do not have to conform. My reaction is different. For example the children’s poems do not have to have the same amount of lines. They do not have to write poems in the same style as an existing poem – allowing the children to be different, to be original and creative. Before I would insist they all used capital letters for the beginning of each line and start each line one below the other, and now I let them shape their poems.’

Write Team lead teacher.

Following on from this, the same teacher goes on to reflect that working with the Write Team has given her greater insight into how to respond to children’s work. It is important to note the emphasis she places on the need to take time in this process, both at the start of the writing and at the end, when giving feedback:

‘It has given me great insight and experience into how to respond verbally to the children’s writing – looking for something unique and inspiring from each piece of work. The main thing I have used is the use of ‘Creative Thinking Time’, asking the children to write in silence for a few minutes about a specific subject and then use the ideas in their written work.’

Write Team lead teacher.

It is also important to note that it is the ideas of the children themselves which are used as a springboard for further work. This corroborates the shift in power-relationships described above.

The pedagogy described by the teachers in the journals can be summarised as one of flexibility and challenge. Pupils are taken away from their comfort zones by the authors, but paradoxically this process is also made to feel very safe. It is a challenge the teachers consistently remark that their pupils are both willing and able to rise to.



3.2.2 Learning about Invisible Pupils

'As a school we are more aware of quiet children, pupils on the margins. We are looking more at way of ensuring all pupils take part.'

Write Team lead teacher.

Teachers commented that working alongside professional writers and writer educators had afforded them the opportunity to observe their pupils more closely, with the result that they saw them in a new light. In particular they commented that their expectations of the pupils had been raised; they now possessed a new awareness of the pupils' capabilities:

'[I've been given] the luxury of a new perception of the pupils, I have been able to concentrate on listening to the pupils and seeing them in a new way.'

Write Team lead teacher.

One teacher in particular emphasised the impact that observing others teaching had on her practice. It changed her own practice, she comments, because it gave her the chance to look deeply at pupils' 'needs', which enabled her to devise better learning experiences for her classes.

Children felt challenged to do well and feel safe at the same time. There is a link in the following statement to those in the reflective journals above, where teachers comment explicitly on the demanding nature of some of the writing activities in their classrooms:

'The children's best work in the Write Team came when they were pushed to think and consider something deeply. Often the work then became more abstract and original. The Write Team schemes of work were very good at giving little pointers, whether they were an actual poem as a model or photograph or artefact. The children were then able to scaffold their work and this gave them confidence to focus on vocabulary choices. This then led to greater satisfaction with their end product and thus this had a domino effect on how they approached the tasks each week. They could see that writing was a craft and they saw it as fun and enjoyable.'

Write Team lead teacher.

It is important to notice that this is a process which led to greater pupil satisfaction about learning, one which cascaded into performance in and attitudes towards other subjects.



3.2.3 Whole School Change

The transformation of ownership of the teaching of writing has been significant in the lives of individual teachers on the Write Team. What makes this project such a powerful example of learning in its fullest sense is the way that it has engendered a sense of trust between individual writers and teachers, which has been capitalised on by schools. Far from a ‘top-down’ model of policy or curriculum transformation, schools have worked collaboratively with the Write Team to make decisions for change based on their knowledge and understanding of their particular contexts. What follows, therefore, is not a ‘one-size-fits-all’ model of change at school level, but a series of snapshots of evidence where new policy has been implemented to advance the experience of invisible pupils in school.

As with individual teachers, the transformation taking place at school-level in this project is twofold, impacting both awareness and policy. The following statement is an example of the way that the Write Team’s focus on invisible pupils has given teachers the opportunity to consider their characteristics and learning needs, with the result that policy has changed:

‘We are much more aware of invisible pupils now. We now spend time each day to ‘make learning inspirational’ and to build in ‘talk time’ in and out of lessons.’

Write Team lead teacher.

‘On a school level we are going to start up a writing club, led by a NQT and supported by me. The Write Team has prompted a staff meeting about invisible pupils; children on the Write Team register have all been placed on the school action plan.’

Write Team lead teacher.

We are developing the Write Team Project in our year group; it is led by a Year 5 TA (Teaching Assistant). It is a group for eight less confident children who go out with her for a 45 minute session. We are using ideas from the Write Team to develop their confidence’.

Write Team lead teacher.

The insights gained about teaching creative writing can be seen to be an influence on whole-school policy, not only for invisible pupils. The new policies which have been put into place explicitly take into account the needs of invisible pupils because they are seen to be a model of good practice:

'We have an extensive list of teaching activities designed to support invisible pupils, which we review termly at staff meetings.'

Write Team lead teacher.

'The Write Team has benefited not only the students in developing their confidence and self esteem, but also given staff some great ideas for working on 'knowledge transformation', eg having students write poems to explain elements of science or coming up with metaphors to understand features of geography or maths.'

Head Teacher Write Team School.

Teachers on the Write Team project identified the following changes in their schools and recognised:

That there had been a change in perception towards the teaching of writing among staff, causing them to reconsider issues such as:

- resourcing of teaching writing,
- the amount of curriculum time given to teaching writing,
- the importance of giving quality feedback to pupils about their writing,
- and the variety of strategies used to teach writing.

The importance of clear communication between writers, teaching and support staff to plan for activities which engage pupils' interests, leading to sustained relationships of trust.

That they had enjoyed and benefited from being placed in the position of learners as they observed the writers and writer educators at work.

That, while sharing commonalities with other training or in-service experiences, in comparison the Write Team presented a comprehensive and holistic model of teaching writing, which was based on:

- high quality teaching ideas and resources,
- sustained periods of writing, feedback and reflection,
- explicit modelling and clear explanations of writing strategies and creative habits of mind by professional writers,
- an ethos of professional respect and sharing of good practice.

3.2.4 Resources

Development of schemes of work by the Write Team Writers was a key way in which the project aimed to capture and share the writers' craft with the teachers and promote the support of invisible pupils. The aim of the scheme was to provide teachers with a range of writing activities that could be used either as individual activities, such as lesson starters, or as complete lessons or modules in themselves. The schemes varied according to genre, focusing on specific skills such as characterisation in fiction or metaphor in poetry.

The schemes of work provided the pupils with opportunities to think like a writer. The focus was on process not outcome, encouraging them to start with what they know – to use their senses, to become more observant, to listen.

Extract From Writing About Home – by Write Team Lead Writer Helen Cross

Start with a quick burst of automatic writing. Close your eyes and imagine what happens when you first wake up in your house. Concentrate on all the sensations of your home. What sounds can you hear – shower running, people talking, radio playing? What is happening? Can you smell anything – porridge bubbling, bread toasting? What can you physically feel around your home – the floorboards under your feet, the scratchy surface of the sofa, the soft cotton of your bed sheets? Write with as much accurate detail as possible, for at least one side of A4.

Share some of the pieces. Discuss what different ideas came up about home: home as a refuge, home as a restful place, a dull place, a busy place. Think about the meaning of home, and all the different ways that writers can approach the theme.

Significant time was given to the pupils to develop their thoughts through group discussion, then working in smaller groups, and finally working alone to develop their ideas. Drama was used to 'increase their self-confidence as they step outside of their own concerns and identities and into the shoes of another real or invented person'

The activities invited the pupils to look at their world in new and different ways – to ask questions and then write down the answers, a technique that was applied to generate poems from across the curriculum.

Extract from Questioning the Past – by Write Team Poet Mandy Coe

In a group, draw up a list of objects from specific periods/events in history: Hadrian's Wall, an executioner's axe, the Golden Hind, a Spitfire. Each pupil chooses one they are going to speak for. The facilitator then reads out a list of questions – one at a time, in order to interview the objects.

Students will write down the answers in the first person narrative, starting a new line for every answer. They will write as if they are the object – imagining that this object can see and hear and feel and that it has a voice. They do not need to write down the questions in addition to the answers, but will need to include a little of the question. So 'what is your name?' would be answered with: They call me...or, I am a...Here are some suggested questions:

What can you see, hear or feel?

What is around you/above you/behind you/below you?

Tell us one tiny detail about yourself.

Tell us a secret

Is there anything you regret?

What do you wish for?

Who are/is your friend/s

What are you afraid of?

Tell us something you once overheard.

Who/what are your?

Each activity was carefully structured to overcome the fear of the blank page. Essential skills such as vocabulary, development, and editing were also included. The aim was for all teachers to be able to find writing activities that could be used at all stages of the writing process.

The content of the schemes included Fiction, Writing about home, Writing a play, Poetry across the Curriculum, and Sports Writing.

The Write Team took writing outdoors in the development of Poetry in the Park, which gave teachers the opportunity to take pupils outdoors and write about wildlife, fossils, history, landscapes, and geology.

All of the schools taking part in the Write Team Project incorporated the Write Team writing activities into their schemes of work, sharing good practice through departmental and whole school staff meetings.

Write Team resources are available to download on the Bath Festivals Write Team website: www.bathlitfest.org.uk/resources



3.3 Writer Explorers at Bath Spa University

This chapter is devoted to an important collaborator with the Write Team, the Primary PGCE English Programme at Bath Spa University. Bath Spa worked with the Write Team in 2009-10 and 2010-11. During this period both writers and writer educators made visits to the university and were invited to take sessions there with both staff and students. Bath Spa students also benefited from training sessions led by two of the Write Team Teachers

The links developed in 2009-10 led to the establishment in 2010/11 of the Writer Explorers, a group of PGCE Primary Initial Teacher Trainees who work with Write Team practitioners in an exploration of their creative writing teaching practice.

Remarks in this section of the report relate to the final year of their collaboration with the Write Team. Thanks are due to lead English tutor Carrie Ansell for her hard work in compiling the report on which this summary is based; and to all the staff and students who participated on the project for sharing their work and their insights with us.

3.3.1 Writing Explorers Rationale

At the beginning of the academic year 2010-11, PGCE Bath Spa teachers were invited to form a group of 20 'Writing Explorers'. This group was formed with the premise that through taking part in the process of composing, they would arguably be in a stronger position to develop the creative voices of children they would later go on to teach. Being in this group was thus a process of immersion in reading, writing and sharing ideas.

As with participating teachers in schools, all the Explorers were given a Reflective Journal. They were asked to reflect throughout the year on their experiences of the writing process; on teaching writing to children whilst on the university taught programme; during three cross-curricular projects (The Built Environment, Creativity, Culture and Identity, Environmental Adventures) and their school placements. The final assignment that Bath Spa teachers have to complete is also a 'Reflective Commentary' on their learning journey as a trainee teacher, critically reflecting on a chosen theme. It was envisaged that the journals would support them with this process.



3.3.2 The Writer Explorers' Learning Journey

Throughout the year, the Writing Explorers had several lectures and workshop sessions in collaboration with Write Team authors and teachers involved with the research project.

It was evident by the end of the course that the 20 Writing Explorers had come on a substantial learning journey. Two of them shared creative writing practices that they had trialled with children whilst on their school placements at a workshop session for the Write Team Conference with well-known writers and policy-makers in attendance (something they probably would never have envisaged doing at the start of the course).

At the end of the course, all Bath Spa teachers are graded. Over half of the Explorers were graded as outstanding, with all the rest being good, with elements of outstanding. This means that they demonstrated that they were, “innovative and creative in their planning”, “captured the interest of all learners” and “inspired and communicated their enthusiasm”. Half of the explorers attained over 90% in the English subject knowledge test, with special awards for excellence.

At the end of the Bath Spa course students were asked to identify their ‘magic moments’ from the course. Students made the following responses:

‘I would just like to say how much I enjoyed the Creative Writing workshop with Mandy Coe the other day. She was a real inspiration to me as a new BST and look forward to taking part in any future sessions you may have on this subject.’

‘Helen Cross was amazing and hugely inspirational. Lots of great practical lesson ideas.’

‘My Magic Moment was listening to Helen Cross; she really inspired me.’

‘Becoming a writer along with the children in my class.’

‘Being given the confidence to take risks and ‘become the writer’.’

3.3.3 The Impact of Write Team Training at Bath Spa University

The experience, from the English team’s point of view, of working with the Write Team has been invaluable.

‘We have forged many links with outstanding educators and practitioners, who will continue to collaborate with us on the English course. The English course has become increasingly innovative, with an emphasis on nurturing teacher identity and creative approaches to teaching English. As lecturers, we have been inspired to be brave in seminars and lectures and in our relationships with students, with an overwhelming emphasis on wishing to share our passion for literacy as well as impart knowledge and skills to Bath Spa teachers.’

Course Coordinator for Primary and Early Years.

A recent OFSTED inspection team commented, during a learning walk on the quality of the literate environment in the English room (a prominent display reflected their collaboration with the Write Team) and they also commented on Bath Spa’s innovative approach in English and their creative partnerships on the English course.

That so many trainee teachers have been able to engage with Write Team activities, and at such a deep level of personal commitment is testament to the hard work, dedication and inspirational quality of the Write Team and their inputs. That so many beginner teachers have been influenced early on in their teaching careers by this high quality training can only be a force for good.

3.4 The Writers

‘There are so many ideas to take back to the classroom. Barriers to my own creativity have definitely broken down.’

Trainee Teacher, Bath Spa University.

The writers were pivotal in setting the tone, ethos, and direction of the Write Team project in all contexts. This project also marked a departure from the established practice of writers visiting schools and delivering a one off session or short residencies.

The theory of Socially Constructed Learning takes as its premise that ‘expert others’ guide those who are less expert than themselves into a ‘zone of proximal development’, where they can develop new skills and knowledge (Vygotsky, 1978). The foundation of this is the ‘intellectual lives’ of those experts, because they implicitly and explicitly influence the creative space that learners (the children, teachers and trainee teachers on the project) are engaged in exploring. Writers’ perspectives of their craft and art as teachers are therefore worthy of inclusion in this report because of the great influence they have had on subsequent teaching and training experiences.

Writers were asked to complete post-project questionnaires on their experiences of working on the Write Team. The responses have been grouped into three different categories, which are itemized and described below.

It was noted that the writers on the Write Team each possessed:

- a strong self-identity as both writers and teachers, leading to an enthusiastic modeling of real writing processes in the classroom.
- a strong awareness of the uniqueness of the Write Team, leading to a committed personal ownership of their teaching on it.
- a strong awareness of the needs of invisible pupils, leading to increased awareness in schools of their profile as learners.

3.4.1 Writers’ Identities

Writers’ responses in all of the above themes were marked in their implicit confidence as writers and their explicit confidence as teachers. As poet Cliff Yates states: *‘I enjoy it, I’m good at it, and it’s worthwhile.’* Sports writer David Globlatt added: *‘It is fun engagement, socially useful, and I love teaching.’*

This confident self-identity is also apparent in the following statements, by Helen Cross and Mandy Coe. Helen Cross presents her work in schools as part of a process of self-interrogation, stemming from her wide experience and already established practice:

‘It’s interesting to interrogate why, as a writer and a teacher, you do what you do. I have taught writing in schools for a long time now and have hundreds of lesson plans, so it was a question of coming up with the key lessons, approaches and activities that I think work and why. It made me think hard about the core of my practice.’

Mandy Coe explicitly draws attention to the differences between writers and teachers in their approach to learners in schools. Coupled with this ‘outsider’ view is a strong belief in poetry as a ‘democratic’ art-form which can include everyone:

‘Writers come into school with no prior knowledge or expectations of specific pupils. This ‘outsider’ approach, by necessity, treats all children equally and often breaks existing classroom dynamics. Many visiting authors will have experienced teachers express surprise when certain pupils engage with the activities in a way they had not expected. In addition, poetry (a democratic and accessible art form), allows young people to shine by exploring methods that suit all learning styles: aural work, the written word, performance, imagery, individual and collaborative work.’

Although, in some cases the writers did bring expectations that teachers felt were prejudicial:

‘Some of the writers have preconceived ideas about what the children will be like. One of them commented on the fact that he thought they would all be using joined up writing. The pupils wanted to know why he thought that, and I felt it was because he drove past semi-detached houses to get to the school and immediately thought the pupils would be privileged and capable of using joined up writing! Writers must come without preconceptions!’

Write Team lead teacher.



3.4.2 Writers' Enthusiasm for the Write Team

It was clear from the statements the writers made about their participation that they had great belief in the Write Team as an agent of change in the lives of the pupils it reached. It was also apparent that they felt an affinity with the Write Team goals and values. This in turn engendered a strong sense of enthusiasm, the impact of which will be seen in comments by teachers about training by writers later in this chapter. Helen Cross sets the tone in her description of the project as 'unique'.

The appeal of the project for Shaun McCarthy was the strong collaboration between writers and writer educators and schools. By the time writers visit schools, both pupils and teachers have been prepared to be receptive to what they have to offer. They are entering fertile territory, as it were. This is very appealing to visiting writers and artists as they feel valued:

‘One of the many great strengths of the Write Team approach is that the coordinator prepares the students for each new writer’.

Shaun McCarthy .

Mandy Coe also notes the impact that close collaboration had on her planning of writing activities for children. Importantly, she identifies that she was 'trusted to go further'. This is a key phrase in that it reveals the permission-giving ethos at the heart of the Write Team enterprise.

3.4.3 Writers' Awareness of the Needs of Invisible Pupils

Perhaps the most strongly theorised aspect of their teaching practice is the writers' insights into the needs of invisible pupils. Mandy Coe noted the connection between a writer's writing 'voice' and their actual speaking voice:

'Crucially for invisible pupils, creative writing is about reflection and voice – in contrast to our dominant culture of 'safety in sameness' it celebrates the idea of the 'outsider': being unique is rewarded.'

The Write Team writers all identified that the emphasis on 'sharing the love of words and the skills of communication' (David Goldblatt) was critical to the change in self-identity of the pupils on the project.

Yet writers also create safe spaces into which pupils can and want to launch their voices. Writers' deliberately value these voices with the effect of increasing the participation and self-confidence of pupils. A second strand of writers' practice in regard to invisible pupils is the confidence that they have in their art-form. Poet Andy Croft says that:

'Writing poetry is equally 'easy' and equally 'hard' for everyone, regardless of whether you are confident or 'clever'. Poetry can be a democratic, collective creative space in which all pupils can feel safe and encouraged.'

It is as though the actual form of poetry is ideally suited to encouraging those pupils who struggle with 'normal' writing activities, because it is more of a level playing field. Helen Cross has similarly high levels of expectation about the power of creative writing activities to 'reach' pupils and give them access to self-knowledge:

'Creative writing, when taught well, and not entirely along the lines advised within the current curriculum, encourages less confident pupils to shine, to raise their confidence and self-esteem. Invisible pupils, when using drama, autobiographical writing, speaking and listening activities will come to know themselves, hear what they think, investigate how they see the world, and develop who they are.'

In summary, what these writers have brought to the Write Team Project reflections is most emphatically a sense of confidence. They are confident in their own identities as writers; they have high expectations of themselves as teachers, explicitly articulating in front of teachers and pupils that they value their oral and written contributions; and finally they have complete trust in their given forms of writing, with the concomitant expectation that pupils will engage with and thrive through them. Therefore, it is not a surprise to read the overwhelmingly positive responses to the training that these writers delivered. They are role models of self-actualised practice, both inside and outside of the classroom. This is both very powerful and very attractive, and offers pupils and teachers a view of writing that is at once life-affirming, energising and challenging.



4. Conclusion

Louise Betts

Learning & Participation Manager, Bath Festivals

Emma Metcalfe

Write Team Project Manager

'The Write Team helped me think of new ideas and learn that it is not always about how much you write it's about what it makes the reader feel'

Write Team pupil

The Write Team successfully demonstrated how creative writing can increase pupil confidence and engagement in learning. The project brought together skilled writers and inspiring teachers who supported invisible pupils to unlock the power of their imagination. The most powerful statements come from the young people that have taken part in the project for whom the project has changed their learning experience at school and beyond.

As a result of this success the Write Team is developing a number of partnerships and initiatives to disseminate and develop our learning further.

Developing closer relationships with schools

The Write Team is an alliance partner with a Teaching Schools Cluster led by a Write Team School. The Teaching School will advocate Write Team teaching and CPD for writing and social inclusion across the cluster. This strategic development could potentially overcome the challenges faced by the Write Team, and similar projects, in effecting institutional change in schools.

The Write Team has also succeeded in its aims to change practice through developing teachers' knowledge and confidence in creative writing both in participating schools and through collaboration with Bath Spa University PGCE programme. The positive impact of this work with teacher training has started to be shared at a national level with Write Team PGCE students presenting seminars at a TDA (Training and Development Agency for Schools) Conference in November 2011.

Working with Writers

The Write Team model has also successfully contributed to changing the perception, in Write Team schools, about the possibilities that working with a writer can bring. The focus on teacher CPD and development of writing resources has ensured that good practice and the skills and knowledge that a writer can bring is shared more widely than if the writer worked with one teacher and one class in a school. Indeed the writing schemes of work, generated trust between the writers and teachers, and enabled the writers

to collaborate more closely with the teachers, addressing the specific needs of their pupils. These features together with a weekly programme of creative writing workshops ensured that the writers work with the pupils was fully contextualised and in the case of secondary schools not inhibited by the timetable.

'By working with the writers I have learnt that everyone can write. I have seen children with really low levels of literacy come up with amazing turns of phrase, similes, metaphors etc – often just one line or phrase in a whole page. These moments can take your breath away and really give the student a sense of being a writer when they have always thought of themselves as “not very good” at writing’.

Write Team lead teacher.

A more challenging aspect of the project has been developing links with the Senior Leadership Teams (SLT's) to raise awareness of invisible pupils and how creative writing can support their development. In some schools it worked well and has resulted in the Write Team's involvement in the Teaching Schools for example. Where it didn't work, the projects ability to impact on whole school change was limited. This lack of understanding is caught up in the ongoing debate around current assessment methods which do not evaluate for creativity, as one of the Write Team lead teachers noted:

'Because there are no Assessment Focuses for pupils' creativity it is difficult to assess formally the impact of the project on the pupils. A marked difference is evident in all pupils' attitude to English and to writing in general. Pupils have also shown progress in their speaking and listening abilities.'

Write Team lead teacher.

This tension in the definition of successful writing meant the Write Team's impact was seen positively only in schools where the Head Teachers or SLT's were confident that creative writing would have a positive upon the pupils' wellbeing, and did not judge the intervention solely in terms of SATS results.

Working with other agencies

In order to overcome this challenge and share the learning from the Write Team and other such creative writing projects, Bath Festivals are collaborating with First Story, Writing West Midlands and other key providers in the development of evaluation tools and research knowledge focusing upon the social and benefits of creative writing projects as well as its impact on writing. The aim is to develop a lobby group that will also seek to disseminate its practice and findings at a national level, including the Department for Education in order to diminish the tension in some schools between the curriculums and working meaningfully with outside creative writing agencies.

It seems fitting to end this report with the words of a Write Team pupil for whom the project has had such a profound impact. If we can get more people talking about the power of creative writing for young people then every young person can speak of this...

'The Write Team is way more fun than literacy in the classroom, here your imagination can go wild. It's the best thing that has happened to literacy.'

Write Team pupil.

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Newbridge Primary School

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Oldfield School

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St John's Primary School

Saltford Primary School

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Appendix 1 - Research Rationale

The rationale for this report is to present the voices of pupils and teachers from the Write Team. As the quotation at the outset of this report states, it is important to take account of these perspectives because they demonstrate to us how the challenge of creating personal and cultural change has been achieved in the lives of the people who participated in that process. By quoting their words we are implicitly paying attention to the meanings they have chosen to make out of their experiences, and confer upon them our own meanings of interpretation and analysis. It is hoped that in doing this we pay particular attention to individual spaces and moments of growth which are otherwise all too easy to miss. It is hoped that this data will be of interest to educators on many levels: to teachers, heads of department and head teachers; to creative writing practitioners and writer educators; to educators in Higher Education or Local Authorities responsible for initial and continuing teacher education; and finally to researchers and policy makers.

Methodology

The aims of the research report are to:

- identify how far the outcomes of the Write Team project have been met
- identify the impact of the project on pupils, teachers and schools
- identify the features which contributed to the success of the project

This research report draws from analysis of the following data to compile its findings:

- 11 teachers' reflective journals
- 181 pupils' letters to authors
- 5 case study interviews with teachers,
- 1 case study interview with trainee teacher
- 1 case study interview with writer educator
- 9 video interviews with pupils
- 2 video interviews with teachers
- pupil questionnaire feedback on performing at the egg Theatre
- teachers' conference focus group discussions
- INSET questionnaire feedback
- pupil questionnaire feedback
- teachers' evaluation comments
- teachers' pen portraits of pupils

Table 1: Investigating the outcomes

Outcome	Research questions	Evidence base
1. At least 70% of the 160 pupils participating in the Write Team sessions across the eight schools show more interest in and are more engaged in learning across the curriculum outside of their Write team sessions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How did pupils describe themselves as learners? How far did pupils' statements about their learning show evidence of a change of perspective? How did teachers describe their pupils as learners? How far did teachers' statements about their pupils show evidence of a change of perspective? 	<p>To be evidenced through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pupils' letters to authors Pupil and teacher questionnaires Teachers' reflective journals Teacher observations and pen portraits
2. At least 50% of the 160 pupils participating in the Write Team sessions across the 8 schools increase their involvement in other school activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How far did pupils' reflections indicate that they were engaging in wider school activities? How far did teachers' statements about pupils indicate pupils engaged in wider school activities? 	<p>To be evidenced through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pupils' letters to authors Teacher questionnaire feedback Assembly presentations, writing clubs and Egg theatre performances
3. Institutional-level changes become evident within at least four of the eight schools designed to increase awareness and support for invisible pupils and prevent pupil exclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What evidence is there of changes in whole school policy regarding the teaching of writing and/or the monitoring and support of invisible pupils? 	<p>To be evidenced through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Case study interviews with teachers Teachers' reflective journals Teachers' conference and focus group Staff meetings and school INSET to include Write Team input, including inputs from writers New schemes of work in place Increased staff confidence in the teaching of writing Development of subject leaders' confidence to implement Write Team ethos and ideas
4. Learning from the Write Team project begins to be shared with other non-participating schools within the Local Authority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What evidence is there of Write Team learning being shared in non-participating schools in the Local Authority? What evidence is there of feedback from these schools and institutions? 	<p>To be evidenced through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Delivery of INSET sessions at non-participating schools by at least four Write Team schools, to disseminate good practice, schemes of work and research knowledge of the needs of invisible pupils

Table 2: Delivering observable change

Observable change	Investigating change
Increased engagement of invisible pupils in learning activities outside of Write Team sessions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pupils' letters to authors • Pupil and teacher questionnaires • Teachers' reflective journals • Case study interviews • Video interviews with pupils • Register for workshops
Increased engagement of invisible pupils in school activities outside of Write Team sessions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assembly presentations: Hayesfield Girls, Saltford, Oldfield Park Junior • Writing Clubs: Broadlands, Hayesfield Girls, Oldfield Park Junior • Performances of Egg in assembly, conference and Bath Children's Literature Festival
Institutional-level changes become evident within at least four of eight Write Team schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dissemination of good practice from Write Team project at school staff meetings and other INSET and training • Schemes of work in schools • SEF of St John's Primary School and subsequent OFSTED Report references to Write Team project • St John's staff inset on supporting pupils lacking confidence • Writing Explorers, Bath Spa University Primary PGCE
At least four participating Write Team schools disseminate good practice, schemes of work and findings through INSET sessions at non-participating schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jane Amies (Newbridge Primary), Lynda Bevan (Hayesfield Girls) and Katherine Morgan (St John's Primary) inputs at Write Team Conference – 64 delegates • Young Writers Competition at Bath Festivals in collaboration with Kate Murphy: Writhlington, Wellsway, St Marks, Monkton Combe – 166 pupils attended workshops, 205 entries to competition • Working with Bath Spa 5X5X5 Creativity project • Ongoing dissemination of research knowledge of the needs of invisible pupils • Teacher-led INSET

Appendix 2

Teacher Reflections: Journals

During 2009-11 teachers were provided with notebooks in which to record their observations and reflections about the project as it progressed. Teachers were not instructed on how these should or should not be completed. The journal entries written by teachers while they observed and took part in Write Team sessions have been coded as belonging to the following categories:

- Journal as a record of events
- Journal as a record of learning
- Journal as a dialogue with practice

Each of these types of journal gives a slightly different flavour of the Write Team project, its practices and outcomes as witnessed by participating teachers. It is important to note that one category is not classified as 'better' or 'worse' than the other, but that they all contribute to providing a rounded picture of what has happened in the lives of the children and the teachers themselves as a result of their participation.

The journals are described as following:

- The journal as record of events:

These journals have been used by teachers to record minute-by-minute observations of classroom interactions as Write Team lessons have progressed. They are categorized by observations of the behaviour of children relating to pupil confidence, instructions of the Write Team authors, and descriptions of outcomes relating to writing, speaking and listening and increased pupil confidence. In particular they are useful for providing the Write Team with data relating to increased pupil confidence in the form of 'pen portraits'. Examples of these are provided throughout section 3.

- Journal as a record of learning:

It is important to stress that these journals are in their nature not always as full of commentary on practice as those journals which create a record of events or form a dialogue with writers' practice. Characteristically they present full examples of the teacher's own creative writing, alongside notes which indicate the instructions and prompts given by writers and writer educators. Therefore, both for reasons of space and confidentiality, I have chosen not to use quotations from these passages. It has been a privilege to read these samples of writing, the richness of which cannot be underestimated in terms of the accelerated learning that they account for. What is clear from reading these samples of work is a sense of deep personal immersion in specific creative writing exercises and one of engagement with creativity in its broadest terms. What emerges from these journals, therefore, is a picture of transformation of teaching ideas on one level, and on another, of transformed knowledge about the process of becoming a creative individual per se. To engender a transformation of the intellectual lives of teachers was not an agreed outcome of the project. This is, therefore, one of the happiest by-products of the Write Team intervention, and it is hoped that this data will continue to be used by participating teachers as they disseminate their experiences to colleagues, both within their own institutions and further afield. It is important that the power of individual teachers' learning, which the project has promoted, should not be lost.

- Journal as a dialogue with practice:

These journals contain elements from the previous categories, but are distinguished by a good deal of reflective material, characterised in particular by questions and observations about both individual children and the practice that is being observed. These journals provide strong evidence of pupil progress in the Write Team lessons and of their pedagogical challenge. Examples of these are provided below.

Teacher Reflections: Conference and focus groups

The annual Write Team teachers' conference was a very useful staging-post for the teachers, organisers, authors and researchers involved with the project. It provided the opportunity for all of these groups to reflect on past experiences, share and evaluate practice, and disseminate ideas. Teachers were explicitly asked to comment on research evidence at the conference day and in the focus group.

Teachers were explicitly asked to comment on the difference between writers and teachers as teachers of writing at the conference days and focus groups. Their responses were fed back and are summarised below:

Teacher Knowledge:

- in-depth knowledge of pupils (e.g. background and needs)
- in-depth experience of managing behaviour and time
- varied knowledge of the writing process
- in-depth knowledge of the national context for teaching writing:
- curricular recommendations (e.g. 'one hour' literacy lesson, genre limitations)
- The standards agenda: National Tests (SATs), league tables, OFSTED

Writer Knowledge:

- lack of knowledge of pupils: an advantage (no preconceived ideas) and a disadvantage (e.g. of specific needs)
- varied knowledge and awareness of managing time and behaviour
- in-depth knowledge of the writing process

- in-depth knowledge of challenging texts to use for teaching
- varied knowledge of the national context for teaching writing

Teacher Behaviour:

- not always welcoming of 'free thinking' ('cautious')
- awareness of time ('stressed')
- awareness of behaviour ('strict')
- more product-focused

Writer Behaviour:

- prepared to make connections
- modelled enjoyment of writing 'for the sake of it'
- trusting of non-linear writing processes ('more accepting of random ideas')
- prepared to live with uncertainty
- challenging and evaluative (e.g. of pupil ideas)
- more flexible in the use of pace in lessons, including silence
- less concerned with formal levels of writing while keen to give pupils feedback
- more process-focused

Teacher Reflections: Case Study Interviews

Towards the end of 2010-11, it was decided to conduct follow-up case study interviews with teachers who had worked on the Write Team in 2009-10 and who were still working on the project. The purpose of these interviews was to give teachers the opportunity to reflect on how far their experiences of working alongside creative writers and writer educators had changed their own and others' practice. What emerged from these interviews was teachers' clear sense of immersion in writing practice and writing pedagogy which lead to a marked impact on their own practice. As a result they commented on changes in the following:

- their perception of the profile and learning behaviours of invisible pupils
- their practice of teaching creative writing
- their understanding of creativity in its widest sense

These changes enabled them to:

- Re-evaluate whole school policy (e.g. on invisible pupils; on the teaching of writing) through staff meetings and in-service training.

Appendix 3

1. Dawn Elliot, Saltford C of E Primary School, Saltford

Seeing pupils differently

Can you describe one method of teaching writing that you have especially enjoyed using on TWT?

It is difficult to choose only one scheme of work, but if I had to it would be the scheme of work where we took the pupils outdoors, and used Prior Park as a venue. I used the scheme of work last week, when I took my class to the community wood. They all wrote cinquains, they wrote some really super poetry. I thought the Prior Park Scheme by Mandy was brilliant. Using the initials on the bridge was a brilliant exercise for the pupils, it made it real, I will use that technique again.

Can you describe what you think the children learned from you using this method?

It taught the children to look at things differently, in more depth. They were spontaneous, the activities encouraged the pupils to make new connections, lots of connections. It kept them interested. It is good to have a structure when they are writing, the scaffolding takes the children further than they think they can go.

Can you describe what you have learned about teaching writing through using this method?

Children need time to think through their ideas, time to use their senses, to appreciate their environment, to observe, to notice, to think about what they are going to write. They also need time to make links and connections between everyday life, their own experience and what they are going to write.

The choice of text you can use to inspire the pupils, you can choose quite advanced material such as Alexander Pope or Emily Dickinson and they will benefit from it.

How far would you describe this method of teaching writing (or others from the project) as different to those you used before?

I teach writing the way I used to when I first trained, the way I want to teach writing with out the constraints of time and class sizes. I also try to make sure that I try the exercises out myself, that I have a go at writing before I ask the pupils to write.

Can you identify any specific ideas about teaching writing which you have learned from working with professional creative writers?

The writing should be real, use personal anecdotes and observations to stimulate writing. Objects and drama to ensure the quality of the writing is strong. This technique really engages the children.

How would you describe the benefits of working with creative writers on TWT project?

The children's writing becomes real, they are engaged. Watching Emma and the creative writers work with the children gave me the luxury of being able to observe the pupils and listen to the pupils - the luxury of a new perception of the pupils, I have been able to concentrate on listening to the pupils and seeing them in a new way. I saw them do things I would not have thought they were capable of doing.

Have there been any drawbacks working with creative writers? Can you describe them?

Some of the writers have preconceived ideas about what the children will be like. One of them commented on the fact that he thought they would all be using joined up writing. The pupils wanted to know why he thought that, and I felt it was because he drove past semi detached houses to get to the school and immediately thought the pupils would be privileged and capable of using joined up writing!

Writers must come without preconceptions.

What would you identify as the most important lesson (as distinct from 'writing idea or technique') you have learned from a creative writer on this project?

You need time. Time for writing, time for discussion, for crafting their writing, for thinking about what they are going to write. Leaving the writing to last is best practice. It is what I would like to do with my class, if it was not for the constraints of school, one hour lessons, class sizes and the pressure of parents to 'see' their children's work. I think we often push the pupils to put down their ideas in writing so we can show the parents and they lose their spontaneity – it is not their best work. We need to think about videoing them or recording their ideas and stories in other ways than just writing, we should not be forcing them to lose the spontaneity of their first ideas which are often their best.

I have also noticed that working with professional writers has changed the children's perception of writing. They see it as a real thing, as a profession and real craft. It gives writing validity. They see the value of writing for its own sake, they enjoy the freedom of just writing.

In your mind's eye –how far is the teacher you were before TWT different from the one you are now?

The Write Team just reinforces what I want to do, it brings it to the fore. It is a refresher. I know what needs to be done in the classroom. It is a reminder.

How far is the Write Team responsible for that change?

Massively responsible for the change. Just to have the opportunity to sit in on the writing lessons and observe what Emma is doing is so valuable. It allows you to reflect on what you do and how you can change it.

In terms of whole school impact, I have passed on the schemes of work to staff throughout the school. I made sure that all the teachers from the upper junior came to all the insets and have, I know, incorporated Write Team teaching ideas into their work. Children just do not have the vocabulary and the teachers need to learn how to bring this out.

It would have been good if more of the staff had been allowed to 'sit in' and watch the lessons as the teachers need to change the way they teach writing. It would be good if teachers could watch other practitioners teaching creative writing, like the situated learning opportunities they do at Bath Spa University.

2. Jane Amies, Newbridge Primary School, Bath

Developing new practice

Can you describe one method of teaching writing that you have especially enjoyed using on TWT? What you have learned about teaching writing through using this method?

I enjoyed the drama, doing freeze frames and asking the pupils how they feel, discussing the way in which their body language shows their feelings. I like the little activities, having fun with language.

The biggest thing I have learnt from the Write Team is asking questions. You can develop characters and stories from a series of questions. It is how you respond to the children's writing. For example one boy described the banana as a radioactive planet with craters. So I said 'Well done', and then started to focus on the technical details of his writing through question and response.

Free writing, for example asking them to write about myths and then when they have finished I might ask them to focus on a completely different detail such as 'What can the character hear in the background?' It brings their writing to life, it gives it depth. They would not have thought about this aspect, it would not have been in their plans.

I transfer this to modelling writing, as I am writing on the board, I ask myself those sorts of questions.

What have the children learnt?

Use of different senses, thinking more deeply about their ideas, taking risks, not feeling you have to get it right first time, playing with language, not knowing what you are going to end up with.

Getting them to appreciate their own ideas, for examples we did some poetry on

The Evacuation. One boy was talking about moving from the city to the country and he described them as CityZens. I asked him about this, highlighting it and celebrating his originality.

Free writing, warming up their minds, they do not have to be right first time. They have learnt that you do not have to know where you are going with Free Writing. Every piece of writing has its own channel; you do not have to be nervous about that it will happen anyway, a story will develop. The problem is that the children have so many ideas, but the children learn that the ideas will channel themselves and the structure will develop.

How far would you describe this method of teaching writing (or others from the project) as different to those you used before?

The short quick warm up activities, I have modified into my National Strategy weekly planning, it has changed the way I structure the lesson. I try to make more time for revising pieces of writing. I talk and appreciate their writing. They get to see what works – it's a bit like Talk for Writing. The children are inspired by the different responses to the questions, the quality of the feedback; it allows them to share the possibilities.

Can you identify any specific ideas about teaching writing which you have learned from working with professional creative writers?

Definitely, taking risks, whereas before with modelled writing I used to plan my writing before, I used to know what I was going to write. Now I go in blind. I can see now that it can go so differently from what you anticipated.

I have always loved reading, it is just another chance to appreciate ideas and language; I really enjoy it. I really value Mandy's comment that you can sell anything if you show you love it! For example the Highway Man poem the children really loved it.

How would you describe the benefits of working with creative writers? Can you describe them?

You learn so many different styles, it is a pleasure to watch and learn from people who love what they are doing. They bring a different perspective; there

is not so much emphasis on punctuation, spelling and presentation. They get creativity flowing.

It is nice to see what is relevant at the moment. The writers have their fingers on the pulse.

Have there been any drawback working with creative writers? Can you describe them?

The drawbacks relate to schools and SATS. It is to do with the amount of time we can put into writing. This current year group are facing SATS and non-fiction always comes up, they have insufficient experience and we need to focus on that.

It would be interesting to see how writers would like a session in one hour, replicating the content and circumstance in which teachers teach.

What would you identify as the most important lesson (as distinct from 'writing idea or technique') you have learned from a creative writer on this project?

Questioning and response; using it to think beyond the obvious, to pick up on detail, to praise and push originality.

Helen Cross's recommendation of ensuring that non-fiction writing is taught through personalizing the writing process, but this is tricky to do without the resources.

In your mind's eye – how far is the teacher you were before The Write Team different from the one you are now?

I allow the children to be more original, they do not have to conform. My reaction is different. For example the children's poems do not have to have the same amount of lines. They do not have to write poems in the same style as an existing poem – allowing the children to be different, to be original and creative. Before I would insist they all used capital letters for the beginning of each line and start each line one below the other, and now I let them shape their poems.

At the beginning of term we did poems for the harvest festival and I encouraged them to develop their own individual voices. I had so many crazy poems each written in their own style.

How far is the Write Team responsible for that change?

Quite a lot, it has made me more appreciative of the children's individuality. I use games to stimulate their language and give them a chance to develop their own voice.

I give them help with the choice of words but I do this through questioning. I see where they want to take it.

The trouble with writing is that there is so much you need to do, it is so overwhelming for new teachers. That is why I model how to write so they can experience the complexity; the punctuation, vocabulary, where their ideas are going. They did not know where to start and were getting thrown, but the Write Team starter activities are good because they provide quick bursts of activity, they know you are not going to mark them and there is no time for analysis, just writing, and this is good.

3. Lynda Bevan, Hayesfield Girls' School, Bath

Cross-curricular writing

Can you describe one method of teaching writing that you have especially enjoyed using on TWT?

I have enjoyed using the items from a bag/box to stimulate ideas for characters/stories.

Can you describe what you think the children learned from you using this method?

I would say they learned about using your imagination, discussing and revising ideas – being willing to change where they are going with their writing rather than doggedly sticking to an idea that isn't working. They also learnt that you can build up to an idea – you don't have to bring the item in at the beginning. They also learnt that we can all have different ideas inspired by the same thing and that they are all equally valid.

Can you describe what you have learned about teaching writing through using this method?

I have learnt that it is not my job to change a writer's thoughts but more to ask questions about their ideas to allow them to sort of go on their own journey of discovery and answer questions which then lead them to ask questions of themselves/their writing. This seems to really foster a willingness to redraft, to tweak, to improve their writing rather than the habitual "I ain't writing it again" response!

How far would you describe this method of teaching writing (or others from the project) as different to those you used before?

It is different in that I have always tried to steer writing too much before. I have tended to have structured worksheets, starter sentences, key vocab etc; this method allow students to spark their own ideas and build their own structure. They write spontaneously but then want to hone their writing. It's like they OWN it rather than me.

Can you identify any specific ideas about teaching writing which you have learned from working with professional creative writers?

I have found that, for analytical writing, the metaphor game and the 6 reasons to forgive activity have been really useful in allowing students to "transform" their knowledge. This often surprises them because when you put the characters or subjects in a different context, they can suddenly articulate what they know; this is often a lot more than they realised.

How would you describe the benefits of working with creative writers on TWT project?

Invaluable!! I particularly liked the experience of INSET with the writers – becoming a pupil again and realising that I could feel really uncomfortable when asked to do certain activities was a valuable experience as was seeing the writers' reactions to my hang-ups – lots of positive feedback reminded me that children need that too; their writing is equally precious to them and they can have the same reservations about sharing it.

Have there been any drawbacks working with creative writers? Can you describe them?

Not really – only that it would be great to have more time with them. It would also be good to have them work with the whole staff and keep coming back as staff tend to start off very enthusiastically using these methods across the curriculum but often need reminders about continuing to do it. Also teachers are often very nervous about creative writing particularly if they are not arts based.

What would you identify as the most important lesson (as distinct from 'writing idea or technique') you have learned from a creative writer on this project?

That everyone can write. I have seen children with really low levels of literacy come up with amazing turns of phrase, similes, metaphors etc – often just one line or phrase in a whole page. These moments can take your breath away and really give the student a sense of being a writer when they have always thought of themselves as “not very good” at writing.

In your mind's eye –how far is the teacher you were before TWT different from the one you are now?

I would say I am different in that I have regained my sense of adventure and fun in teaching; I am more likely to go “off-piste” and have a bit of fun with writing/use creative writing to help with analytical writing. It has made me enjoy the process of writing with students as well as “teaching” them to write rather than simply focusing on assessment at all times!

How far is the Write Team responsible for that change?

To a large degree; I think I had forgotten what fun teaching was but having that time in the Write Team, seeing someone else be in charge but being part of the process reminded me that working with children isn't all about assessment and testing and getting the punctuation perfect; rather working with children is about letting them discover what they can do, allowing them to own the knowledge and allowing them to create rather than forcing them to meet criteria. Having had the confidence to try out techniques in the classroom with year 7 right through to 13 has also allowed me to see what pupils are capable of. It's brought a lot of enjoyment back into my classroom.

4. Katherine Morgan, St. John's Primary School, Midsomer Norton

Institutional Change

Can you describe one method of teaching writing that you have especially enjoyed using on TWT?

Using the suitcase to create a character, story plot and subsequent story, an idea from Helen Cross.

It worked because:

- It had a good structure that I was very clear about
- The hands-on approach of using a real suitcase inspired the children
- I could see children's excitement and listening to their comments and discussions both with me and with their peers
- I could see all pupils responding so positively regardless of their writing ability
- I could see the range of ideas that were thought of by the pupils (scientists, explorers, archaeologists, builders, crocodile hunters etc).
- It was useful to have a resource that could be so flexible for working across the year groups and age ranges
- The quality of writing produced was very good
- There was a wide range of activities that led up to the story writing, by which point the pupils had very good knowledge of their character
- Activities such as interviewing made me and others think of justifications and links in our ideas that we may not have considered previously

Can you describe what you think the children learned from you using this method?

- How to use imagination to create a character and story
- How to link events
- How to ensure story is not too complicated, with too many characters
- How to be confident and excited about their writing
- How to ask questions
- How to use objects to stimulate ideas
- How to plan coherently
- How to be proud of their writing
- How to make their writing personalised to their interests
- Development of speaking and listening skills
- Development of working with their peers to develop or discuss ideas

Can you describe what you have learned about teaching writing through using this method?

- To ensure that the writing stimulus allows children to tailor it to their personal interests
- Children need modelling prior to their own attempts, so I did each activity myself before inviting the children to write
- How to allow the pupils the freedom to go anywhere with their story and for me as a teacher to not feel 'scared' when the story is out of my control; growing in confidence not only to give ideas but also in giving guidance e.g. developing the story through events I had not thought of, using their ideas not mine

- How excited the children can get using real objects (e.g. the suitcase activity) and how they can be so deeply drawn into the concept as a result
- How giving the children the time to investigate the suitcase and return to it many times encourages their excitement and enthusiasm
- How the children are very capable at a young age of achieving interesting, personal and varied creative writing when given the appropriate stimulus and scaffolding

How far would you describe this method of teaching writing (or others from the project) as different to those you used before?

Previously, in a Year 2 class, I have used Pie Corbett's Story Making Project which is very good, providing language development opportunities, story structure and format. The Write Team methods allow for much more individuality for each pupil; it encourages them to include their personal interests into their work. It allows them to be much more creative. It is good to start with objects as a starting point rather than learning a story to them work from (although this is beneficial too, as another option).

Can you identify any specific ideas about teaching writing which you have learned from working with professional creative writers?

- Small story boxes by Helen Cross which have been made by the staff and put into our storytelling area for use by the children. The staff has a good understanding of how these can be used from the INSET by Helen Cross.
- Games for developing imagination and speaking and listening – e.g. the washing basket activity; writing without using the letter e to develop more careful choice of wording
- Poetry writing ideas from Mandy Coe (shared at staff meeting)
- How to develop drama including adding effects to the performance and creating scenes

How would you describe the benefits of working with creative writers on TWT project?

- Working with the writers has given the staff a new perspective, we have had good training opportunities
- It has been exciting for the pupils as they are taught by someone from outside school
- It has raised pupils' confidence and enjoyment in writing, building enthusiastic learners
- We have benefited from specialised teaching by people from the 'industry' (authors and poets etc)
- New and creative ideas are shared with the staff
- It has promoted the sharing of good practice via INSET and staff meetings
- It has raised the profile of creative writing for me as literacy leader and for the school
- It has led to me developing 'The Creative Write', our own version of The Big Write, linking the ideas from TWT and developing our pupils' ability to write for sustained periods, in areas or genres of their own choice, inspiring them and allowing them to write in ways that are potentially not normally available to them. Pupil feedback on this has been positive, confirmed by the school's OfSTED report of October 2010, in which pupils refer to being 'inspired' to write
- It has developed the pupils' ability to write for extended periods of time without the planning or scaffolding prior to the writing (good preparation for SATs)
- We have enjoyed experiences such as performing at The Egg Theatre, which would never normally occur
- It has developed our engagement with parents. They are involved in their

children's learning in a different aspect – e.g. watching their performance at The egg

- For me personally it has led to my link with Bath Spa University and planning and teaching on the Primary PGCE English course, sharing the work of TWT

Have there been any drawbacks working with creative writers? Can you describe them?

Teachers feel that the curriculum is tight already and TWT sessions have reduced the normal curriculum time further. It has been a challenge guiding some teachers to take the risk with the project and to try to incorporate other aspects of the curriculum through alternative methods or cross-curricular sessions.

The more mechanical aspects of writing have been less evident with the project as these have not been its aim. Teachers did raise concerns relating to the teaching and pupils' use of grammar and punctuation. The project has encouraged the children who are less confident to write but now they need to also incorporate these important principles to make their writing an even better quality.

What would you identify as the most important lesson (as distinct from 'writing idea or technique') you have learned from a creative writer on this project?

To give enough structure to create ideas for writing but ensure that this structure is also free enough to allow for personalisation by the pupils and for them to be able to write stories that are individual to them (e.g. the use of the objects for example do this.)

In your mind's eye –how far is the teacher you were before TWT different from the one you are now?

There is a huge difference, my confidence in my own and my pupils' writing ability has greatly improved. My expectations of what they can produce and achieve has been challenged and raised. I am much more likely to take risks or

allow the pupils to take risks with their writing now, and have less fear of where it may lead.

As a subject leader, my confidence and understanding of good practice and varying techniques has also significantly changed. It has also raised my profile as a literacy leader having taken over from the previous deputy head. This has allowed me to take ownership of the subject and lead it with much greater assurance than I had previously.

The work with Bath Spa University has been a result of the project for myself as a leader and this has given me a potentially new direction in terms of my future career. It has given me opportunities that may not have been open to me if I had not been part of the project. It is great to work with the students and share my daily practice with them, seeing their enthusiasm and supporting them in their development to becoming fully qualified teachers.

How far is the Write Team responsible for that change?

Overwhelmingly responsible!! The links with the university have been made through attending the conference and meeting university staff. Learning ideas and good practice occurred from working with Mandy and Helen on the occasions they came into school to work with pupils or with staff and also working with Emma and Karl on a regular basis in school. Not to mention the trip to The Egg. It has been a brilliant experience for my school and myself. Thank you for all the opportunities given and for accepting us on the project for a second year.

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