

## Self-regulated strategy development

### Highfields School

#### **Problem: What challenges do your school(s) have that need to be addressed?**

Analysis of writing outcomes at Key Stage 4 demonstrates that many pupils struggle to structure, develop and shape their ideas for specific audiences and purposes. This is particularly apparent with middle and lower prior-attainers who struggle to plan coherently and lack confidence as writers. At GCSE, the mean mark for narrative writing was 13.9/ 40 in 2017 in all centres, whilst Highfields pupils' mean mark was 15.1. Whilst this shows our pupils outperform pupils in other schools, it highlights that there are issues with extended writing that need addressing, as identified in the Educas GCSE examiner's report.

Self-Regulated Strategy Development (SRSD) is an approach which helps pupils develop confidence as writers and gives them tools to plan and develop extended writing. By adopting this strategy, we hope to strengthen pupils' ability to plan and produce coherent transactional writing and ensure more stable results across the ability range. Whilst elements of the SRSD approach were used with individual classes within the 2017 cohort, it was not being applied in a systematic and methodical way: aspects of it were adopted by individual classroom teachers, but not on a whole departmental level, or with consistency so the scores in writing outcomes currently cannot be fully attributed to using this approach.

#### **Innovation: How will the innovation help improve the problem you have identified and benefit teachers and learners?**

SRSD employs metacognitive approaches alongside scaffolded planning tools to enable pupils to approach their writing more effectively. Introductory lessons explore initial attitudes and resistance to writing and ways to overcome this; teachers also introduce acronyms POW (Pick a point of view; Organise ideas; Write it) and TREE (Topic, Reason, Example, End it), as well as planning sheets to model and practice effective planning for a piece of extended writing aimed at a specific audience and purpose. These approaches are repeated for subsequent pieces of extended writing so that they are familiar and become embedded. In the US, research

demonstrates it can be quickly implemented: with elementary-aged pupils, 8 to 15 lessons conducted over 4 to 8 weeks is often sufficient to reach initial independent performance and ownership of a set of strategies in a writing genre (Harris et al., 2009; Harris and Graham 2016).

### **Existing evidence: What evidence is there that this innovation will improve outcomes?**

Existing research by Harris and Graham (2016) in the US and the Education Endowment Foundation in the UK (EEF, 2014) demonstrates that the SRSD intervention for writing has a tangible and measurable impact on pupils' confidence as writers and the writing they produce. Harris and Graham (2016) stated 'Meta-analyses have shown that SRSD achieves significantly higher effect sizes, or impact on learning to write, than any other researched instructional approaches in writing'. Currently, the Calderdale Excellence Partnership are conducting an EEF trial with Year 6 and Year 7 pupils. The approach provides acronyms and resources to help pupils plan and structure their extended writing. Conclusions from an initial trial identified that it '...appeared to have a large positive impact on writing outcomes. The overall effect size for writing, comparing the progress of pupils in the project to similar pupils who did not participate was +0.74' (EEF, 2014).

#### Pilot Study

Within Highfields School, the approach was trialled with a small group of three Year 9 classes taught by three staff from January 2017 to July 2017 with promising outcomes. At the end of the trial, 60% of pupils had met their target grade in writing for their final standard assessment and 31% were above their target grade for writing. The pupils in every class completed a questionnaire which showed positive attitudes to the intervention and its effect. Moreover, the three staff involved agreed that written outcomes were more fully developed and the intervention greatly improved pupils' confidence and attitudes to writing.

### **Research question or hypothesis: What effect will the intervention, implemented for how long, with which pupils, have on what outcomes?**

What impact does Self-Regulated Strategy Development delivered from September to June have on pupils' extended writing in Year 8 compared to control groups?

We predict that at the end of the year, pupils who participated in the intervention will perform better than the control group with their writing and perceive themselves as more confident and capable writers.

## Method: Include sample, design, measures, intervention, process evaluation, and analysis

### Sample/ participants

Four Year 8 mixed prior attainment classes in English will receive the intervention. Year 8 was chosen as the structuring of class groupings is stable by Year 8 whereas changes take place with teaching groups in Year 7. In addition, Year 8 will probably be more receptive to the self-efficacy and confidence building element of the intervention, which involves adopting positive self-talk to develop motivation, than Year 9. Consent will be gained through an opt out letter to parents regarding use of pupil data.

Participating classes will be selected from the current Year 7 classes ensuring an even distribution of PP, EAL and SEN. There are 252 pupils currently in Year 7, 60 of whom are taught in two top sets for English. The remaining pupils are placed into 8 mixed prior attaining classes with upper, middle and lower prior attainers and PP, EAL and SEN pupils distributed evenly across the groups as well as being ethnically diverse. The classes have approximately 20 pupils per group. The sample will include pupils who are receiving other literacy interventions, including Fresh Start, however these pupils occur across the pupil population so will be found in both the intervention and control group.

In order to ensure that the intervention and control groups are taught by a range of equally matched staff regarding teaching experience, both the intervention and control groups will be taught by staff who have not had any experience of the intervention. Four teaching staff (along with relevant TA's and LSA's) will be trained in the intervention in July. It is important to consider other elements, such as shared classes and where LSA's will be targeted too as this could impact on the results. However, all staff involved in the intervention groups will teach exclusively their own class in Year 8 which will lessen the likelihood of contaminating the input for the control groups. We will impress upon the control group teachers the need to use the current resources and materials to teach the writing outcomes this year and not use any element of SRSD for teaching writing to Year 8. Ms E Buckley (project lead) will conduct the evaluation, but will not teach either the control or intervention groups.

### Design and assignment to condition

Four mixed prior attainment classes will be randomly assigned for the intervention alongside four control groups who will be taught as usual. I will consult with the Key Stage 3 Coordinator for English to ensure that the classes are evenly matched on prior achievement, PP, SEN and EAL pupils before randomly assigning groups for the intervention. The two top set classes are not

involved in the evaluation which means that the middle prior attaining pupils can be randomly allocated.

### Measures

All participating pupils will sit pre and post Proof of Progress Tests with a focus on transactional writing (<https://www.nomoremarking.com/pop>). The first test will take place in September 2018 before the intervention is implemented. The second one will be administered at the end of the intervention in June 2019. The test has been selected as it assesses pupils' extended writing, as opposed to the GL Assessments which only take a snapshot of pupil's understanding of grammar and accuracy in writing. The tests take 30 minutes, can be administered in the classroom and will be marked using the principles of 'No More Marking'. Tests will be marked by all staff in the department, including LSAs and TAs.

We propose to initially rank order the sample and then discuss and decide on grading within the rank order; this will be done by using the benchmarking and moderation used by No More Marking. No More Marking have agreed that the pupils can complete an initial assessment for Year 8s in the Autumn Term and then a subsequent one in June. The assessment for the June task will be assessed alongside the national cohort, but some of the scripts from September will be included in the June assessment so as to reverse anchor the September cohort. This ensures the September and June cohorts will be on the same scale, but the June cohort will be compared nationally as well. In addition, we will adjust the settings so that the teachers who teach participating pupils group will not be marking submissions of pupils within their class in order to ensure there is no bias in the judgement process.

### Intervention

The strategy aims to teach pupils resilience, self-efficacy and metacognitive skills through actively encouraging them to develop a positive attitude to writing through adopting motivational statements. The metacognitive element is developed through teaching the acronyms described previously, to give pupils an approach and then framework for approaching writing. In addition, pupils are given planning sheets and exemplar writing to enable them to plan and write appropriately for format, audience and purpose. This intervention will be delivered in a highly structured way for writing produced in October, February and May and to prepare for the Proof of Progress test in June. The approach will be revisited at each stage to consolidate understanding for Year 8 pupils by four classroom teachers.

The innovation will be delivered from September 2018 until June 2019. Pupils will have three 2-3 week blocks of SRSD lessons over the year focusing on non-fiction writing. This would happen in 2x100 minute lessons each week. Two external assessments of writing will occur in September 2018 and June 2019. The intervention will be used to teach varied writing outcomes and will be

delivered each half term for the Autumn, Spring and Summer terms. Pupils in the intervention group will be taught the approach in a systematic, methodical way for 3 weeks each half term in order to complete a formal letter, a speech and a magazine article, as well as completing a final assessment using proof of progress tests. Pupils will complete the written assignments in controlled conditions in classrooms.

The control group will be taught using the usual writing approaches that are in schemes of work and individual classroom teachers' resources.

### *Training and Support*

The staff involved in the intervention group (i.e. teachers, TAs and LSAs) will be trained for a one day session in July 2018 where lesson plans, powerpoints and planning templates will be supplied as both hard copies and in digital format. Exemplars of planning grids and pupil work will be shared with staff to model and illustrate the approach. Lesson plans, presentations and worksheets will be available for staff to deliver the intervention with consistency; these can be adapted for different writing outcomes alongside teachers from the school who have all had experience of the approach. Throughout the year, staff will be supported with regular meetings to discuss and address issues that have been identified in informal drop-ins or that staff may encounter individually or as a whole. It is important that a balance is established with the support offered throughout the year to ensure that the intervention can be established in a workable way should we wish to adopt it on a wider scale.

### Process evaluation

Data will be gathered through short lesson observations, conducted by the project lead. An observation checklist will be used. Both the intervention and control groups will experience drop-ins to ensure that there are no elements of SRSD being used by the control groups. In addition, regular book scrutiny will take place as another means of monitoring the use of SRSD in the intervention groups and to check that the control group are not using aspects of the approach.

Non-academic outcomes of pupils' attitudes to writing will be measured by a surveymonkey questionnaire in class. In addition, teachers' attitudes will be measured after the initial implementation through questionnaires and interviews conducted by Mrs K Allen, the Lead Practitioner for English, and then on a termly basis to ascertain how beneficial staff find the intervention for *perceived* outcomes around pupil attitudes and confidence in writing.

### Data analysis

Analysis will be conducted by looking at the ranking and grades of the control and intervention groups at the pre-test and post-test. The grades for the Proof of Progress Tests will be

established using the benchmarking used by No More Marking. We will then calculate the effect size through establishing intervention group progress minus control group progress divided by whole group standard deviation. Ultimately, we will be analysing whether the intervention or the control group made more progress.

Analysis of the impact on Pupil Premium, low prior attaining pupils and pupils with a special educational need as subgroups will also take place.

In addition, quantitative analysis of the survey monkey questionnaire responses and data from checklists will be conducted along with a thematic analysis of qualitative data.

### **Conclusion: What will happen if your innovation improves outcomes, or not? What are the limitations of your evaluation?**

#### Potential Limitations

Limitations to the design and evaluation of the implementation could be:

- Pupils maturing as writers over time, developing skills as a result of repeated practice, however this is likely to affect both the intervention and control groups similarly.
- Over representation of particular groups either in the control or intervention groups which could affect the development of pupils as writers e.g. undiagnosed SEN; over representation of low prior attainers. This can be addressed through discussing and looking carefully at the allocation of groups with Key Stage 3 Coordinator for English in July 2019.
- It must be clarified to staff who teach the control groups not to use any element of the intervention in order not to contaminate the sample. This will be established rigorously straight away from July 2018 onwards through allocating a significant part of departmental meeting time to explaining the evaluation and the importance of ensuring accuracy and integrity with the results. This will be reinforced with a follow up email. Reminders about the initiative and the need for no contamination of the control group will be issued to staff again in September and half termly throughout the year.
- Possibly, the control group could feel that they are being perceived differently and therefore behave differently, however as the intervention is taking place within individual classrooms, this should not be the case.
- The settings to which the findings can be generalised are state schools with similar demographics of pupil deprivation, prior attainment and pupil ethnicity.

## Implications

A positive finding would mean that the approach would be delivered and evaluated for Years 8 and 9 pupils, including top set classes for each year group. This would mean that all staff, teaching assistants and learning support staff would be trained in the approach. Another small scale study could be trialled with Year 7 after Christmas 2019. If the approach were to be adopted across Key Stage 3 and proved successful, then we would approach other schools and apply for additional funding to see if there is impact when delivered to an entire year group.

If results are negative or neutral, it is important to ascertain why this may be the case: is it due to the profile of particular classes; effectiveness of teaching, or issues such as staff absence? It may prove helpful to consider approaches to writing that the control group classroom teachers used to see if an alternative approach proved more effective.

## References and further reading

Education Endowment Foundation (2014). Improving Writing Quality: Evaluation Report and Executive Summary. Available at:

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