



Case Study: Slough and Eton College

How Slough and Eton College is developing Talk for Writing to suit secondary schools

Slough and Eton C of E Business and Enterprise College is well on its way to becoming the first Talk for Writing Training Secondary School. Last spring, Senior Deputy Aruna Sharma approached Julia Strong about an extended project to help embed Talk for Writing throughout the school. The key aspect of this extended training was not the two training days for all staff on how to adapt the approach for all curriculum areas but the role of the project team in leading the project within the school.



Students acting it out.

As soon as Julia met the school project team, she knew that the project had every chance of success because of the quality of the team that had been assembled. Apart from Aruna, there was an Assistant Headteacher and six heads of curriculum areas. All were very willing to consider how the approach might work in their area and determined to trial the approach in their areas prior to the first whole-school training day. Their success at implementing the approach in their lessons and starting to spread the approach within their departments was such that by the time of the first training day, Executive Headteacher Paul McAteer informed everyone that all teachers at the school would be expected to use the approach.

Senior Deputy Aruna Sharma takes up the story: how the Talk for Writing approach is making a difference at Slough & Eton.

Slough and Eton Church of England Business and Enterprise College is an outstanding school situated in Chalvey which is one of the most deprived wards in the South East of England. It is an exciting, vibrant and rewarding place where everyone can experience the enjoyment of learning. The young people from over seventy countries attending Slough and Eton are the greatest strength of the school. In November 2013, Ofsted judged the school to be outstanding in every category.

Over 97% of the pupils are from ethnic minority backgrounds and over 75% of pupils are Muslims with the Pakistani group making up the largest cohort. Approximately, 44% of pupils are on free school meals significantly higher than the national average, about a third of the pupils are on the SEN register and 70% of pupils are EAL. It is an inclusive school with pupils joining us with physical disabilities; the 25 pupils in our specialist resource bases make an overall total of 33 pupils with statements for learning and physical disabilities.





Slough has 14 mainstream secondary schools out of which four are Grammar schools and one a type one academy with a selective intake and one a non-selective girls school. With two other girls schools in the neighbouring authority, and the cultural choice from parents preferring female only schooling, this causes a male to female imbalance at Slough and Eton with a ratio over 2:1. Around 30% of pupils with Key Stage 2 data arrive in Y7 at least one NC level below national average for English and Maths – in addition to those who arrive with no data at all for English and Maths and are new to the country.



Some of our pupils arrive at Slough and Eton with low self-esteem for being unsuccessful in securing a place at a grammar school or with levels that are significantly below the national standards. Due to the EAL nature of the intake and low reading and literacy levels on arrival, improving pupils' core skills of reading, communication and writing has been the biggest challenge for the school. We recognised that we needed to address this in a systematic way with a focus on developing consistent pedagogical approaches across the curriculum which will improve pupils' reading, writing and articulation.

Why Talk for Writing?

For the last 3 years, we developed our in-house 'Talking Minds' project to address the low literacy levels of pupils and a considerable amount of professional development of our staff was devoted to developing and

implementing strategies across the curriculum on the areas listed below.

1. Core skills across the curriculum
2. Challenge and engagement
3. Dialogue and questioning
4. Quality Feedback
5. The 8 characteristics of the Slough and Eton learner.

The key focus has been on developing pupils' oracy and a rich dialogue in the classroom through good questioning and using a range of other teaching strategies which allowed pupils to learn to articulate their thinking. We also wanted to ensure that we were challenging pupils' learning at every level and invited James Nottingham to lead our inset day and then implemented some of his ideas and strategies around putting pupils in 'the Pit' and creating that 'wobble' in pupils that helps underpin quality learning and progress.

Since the methodology of Talk for Writing is based on the principles of formative assessment and that was our key focus in the previous years as part of the Talking Mind project, it seemed to naturally dovetail our work from previous years.

The overarching aim of the project has been to raise attainment across the curriculum. Having established the strong foundations to build upon and the opportunity arose to focus on developing pupils' writing skills through establishing the Talk for Writing approach.

Implementation plan

The following points sum up the carefully planned the approach that the school has taken:

- Prepared a proposal with a rationale for implementing Talk for Writing including a time line for the launch, subsequent training, monitoring procedure etc. as well as the overall costs involved
- Presented the proposal to the Senior Leadership Group to get approval



- Presented the proposal to the Governors
- Adopted the implementation plan and included it in the school development plan
- Carefully selected a team of middle and senior leaders as the project team – Head of Science, Business Studies, History, Modern Foreign Languages, SENCO, Assistant Head responsible for reading inventions and the literacy across the curriculum coordinator
- Planned all the inset dates and monitoring through learning walks in to the school calendar for the following year

All of this work was undertaken in June and July prior to the launch in the following year. This allowed any problems to be considered, ironed out and everyone kept fully informed before the implementation. This included roles and responsibilities of the project team to ensure the success of the project.

What has happened so far?

The project team received an initial training day so that they could trial the approach and develop ideas prior to the first whole-school training day. The project team then fed back before the second whole-school training day and selected which areas they wanted to showcase. All staff have received the training and have embedded some of the approaches in to their everyday practice. In the last SLT learning walk, teachers were able to demonstrate that they were enabling the pupils to internalise the patterns of language for different subjects through focussed talk imitating the text orally as well as ‘warming up’ the words and phrase through text map etc. Pupils have particularly benefitted from the structured approach to writing and have been using the ideas of ‘Cold Task and Hot tasks’ to demonstrate their progress. They have also found the ‘boxing-up’ approach very useful for helping them structure their ideas. The Business Studies department explains how dramatic the difference has been.

- *“Making notes in a box on the 5 key ideas has totally changed the way we teach.”*
- *“It’s even transformed accountancy!”*

- *“It’s revolutionised the way the students can answer the unit 4 questions.”*
- *“We feel like we are walking on water.”*

Because Talk for Writing includes developing a consistent way of analysing and presenting model text as appropriate to the demands of different subjects across the curriculum, the pupils have benefitted by being able to transfer what they learn in one area to support learning in another.

We have been able to showcase good practice from SEN, RE, Technology, Business Studies and Science to all staff and governors and the presentations were truly inspiring because they demonstrated how the Talk-for-Writing approach managed to improve pupils’ standards of writing across different subjects in such a short space of time.

The science department’s enthusiasm for the approach is reflected in many other areas. Head of department Hiri Arunagiri reported back to the project team:

- *“The students feel pride in their own improvement and success”*
- *“The staff really like it”*
- *“There’s a real sense of ‘Let’s see what we can do now”*
- *“There’s much more conversation about teaching and learning now”*

Hiri explained to all staff on the second training day how much the students have enjoyed text mapping model text to help them internalise the language they will need to express themselves coherently in science. The images below show students mapping their own text which enables each student to achieve a personalised approach.



The special needs department trialled the approach and found that it made a significant difference to the student's achievement as evidenced by the 'Cold and Hot tasks' below. The picture to the left shows pupils miming a text. The key points that the department fed back are:

- Talk for Writing techniques work for pupils with SEN.
- Lots of pupils with SEN struggle to remember new concepts and words in subsequent lessons. The visual and kinaesthetic aspect of Talk for Writing helps them to remember.
- Pupils with SEN often have low self-esteem and confidence and Talk for Writing demonstrates how they have improved.
- Shared writing enables the teacher to demonstrate the thought process of writing. The pupils particularly benefited from understanding how to transfer ideas from a plan into a long piece of writing. They all went on to use this skill in their 'Hot Task'. Below is an example of

Hadi – a Year 9 SEN pupil's work and the improvements she was able to make by applying Talk for Writing approach.

Hadi's Cold Task

Chicken and Cat miptor.

- You need to clean it ^{with} ~~in~~ a ^{water} ~~in~~ a week.
- Feed it ^{with} ~~with~~ food and ^{water} ~~to~~ ~~it~~.
- Keep it ⁱⁿ ~~in~~ a stronger.
- You will need to ^{buy} ~~by~~ a ^{so} ~~so~~ it can ^{exercise} ~~exercise~~.
- It need to ^{exercise} ~~exercise~~ at least 2 hours a ^{day} ~~day~~.
- It ^{also} ~~also~~ like to run for 20 ^{minutes} ~~minutes~~ a ^{day} ~~day~~.
- It can ^{protect} ~~protect~~ your ^{faminy} ~~faminy~~ form ^{bad} ~~bad~~ people.
- It is one of the ^{fast} ~~fast~~ ^{chicken} ~~chicken~~ and ^{cat} ~~cat~~ miptor in the world.
- I like to play ^{foot} ~~foot~~ ball and like to ^{like} ~~like~~ you a lot.

A1 B1 C1 D1

- Lesson 1 – Cold Task
- Lesson 2 – To use an adjective to describe a noun.
- Lesson 3 – To start sentences in a variety of different ways.
- Lesson 4 – To use connectives to develop sentences.
- Lesson 5 – To develop descriptive writing using adjectives and connectives and sentence openers.
- Lesson 6 – To identify and locate paragraphs.
- Lesson 7 – To plan a piece of work in paragraphs.
- Lesson 8 – To use a plan to write a piece of work.
- Lesson 9 – Hot Task

After 9 lessons, Hadi's Hot Task:

A miptor has ^{sharp} ~~sharp~~ teeth to eat ^{hard} ~~hard~~ food also long legs to run fast and the color of a miptor is green ^{because} ~~because~~ it can ^{run} ~~run~~ fast in the forest, miptor can be kept as a pet. They are very good pets ^{because} ~~because~~ they help you with your house. ^{Altho} ~~Altho~~ a miptor lives for 20 years and then dies.

A miptor lives ⁱⁿ ~~in~~ up in ^{tall} ~~tall~~ trees ^{because} ~~because~~ predators like lions can't eat them. Also their skin color is green ^{because} ~~because~~ it can ^{hide} ~~hide~~ in the rain forest they have sharp ^{claws} ~~claws~~ to ^{catch} ~~catch~~ food like fish and meat for the young.

A miptor like to eat fish the most ^{because} ~~because~~ it is easy to ^{catch} ~~catch~~ and ^{with} ~~with~~ the help of their sharp ^{claws} ~~claws~~ miptors ^{share} ~~share~~ food in the night ^{to} ~~to~~ feed the young. Young miptor can only eat fish ^{because} ~~because~~ they don't have sharp teeth yet ^{so} ~~so~~ fish is ^{soft} ~~soft~~ to eat.

A miptor like to run around and ^{run} ~~run~~ races with ^{different} ~~different~~ miptors they exercise 2 days a week ^{because} ~~because~~ they don't eat a lot of food a ^{day} ~~day~~.

A miptor can be kept as a pet ^{because} ~~because~~ they are very ^{friendly} ~~friendly~~ and like to help in your house. ^{like} ~~like~~ ^{cleaning} ~~cleaning~~ up ex: pick up ^{up} ~~up~~ rubbish and ^{put} ~~put~~ it in the bin then give a ^{fresh} ~~fresh~~ ^{so} ~~so~~ the get used to it.

I think a miptor is a great pet to



Improvements made:

- Range of connectives (and, because, also, so).
- Longer compound sentences.
- Structure (logical paragraphs, introduction and conclusion, different sentence openers)

Content (developed points with examples and reasons, viewpoint given, adjectives, description, subject specific vocabulary).

- Gives advice and tries to interest the reader

The project has been very successful up to this point because it has a holistic approach to developing staff to implement strategies, the amount of time and resources allocated have been appropriate including covering staff to be trained and maintain the same team throughout the project. We have also allowed time and support for staff to trial things and share ideas.

Julia concludes

When I went round the school in March, every department I spoke to reported increased progress and enthusiasm for learning and teaching. Most amazingly Year 9 students clapped and cheered in one English lesson when they knew I was the source of the new teaching methods because of the added confidence and progress that they had brought. Most importantly, the students could articulate why the process is making a difference. It is hoped that Slough and Eton will become a Talk for Writing Training School from September. If your secondary school is interested in a focused Talk for Writing project, please contact julia.strong@talk4writing.com.