

Using a Lesson Study continuing professional development approach in literacy: Improving reading (Year 3 comprehension)

Teacher's initial assessments and observation

I need to decide on my starting point for using Lesson Study as an approach

Some children are not making sufficient progress in reading comprehension.

My concerns

- Children with good word recognition and literal comprehension are struggling with the use of inference. They can extract explicit meaning but find it very difficult to read between the lines, even when the inferred meaning is clear.
- They do not apply reasoning skills to speculate about the meaning of a text beyond the literal.
- They are rarely specific when discussing author intention and cannot usually find examples or evidence to justify their limited responses.

Teacher's questions

- What can I do to improve *children's use of inference* when they interpret, engage with and respond to texts?

- Do they understand how to *use reasoning skills* to infer or speculate? For example, is there evidence of them applying simple reasoning skills in any other learning contexts across the curriculum – for example, science?
- How can I encourage them to dig deeper, *beyond the literal meaning* of texts, particularly fiction and poetry?
- Do children in other classes show the same weaknesses and, if so, have other teachers found learning or teaching *approaches that work*?
- What *resources* are available to support the teaching of reading (strands 7 and 8)?

Step 1: Analyse assessment and observation

information to sharpen the focus

I need to build a picture of children's progress and attainment in reading by gathering evidence

What information is already available to help me plan how to make the best use of a Lesson Study approach to accelerate progress in reading for a focus group of children?

Learning

- What information do I have that informs me about children's progress and attainment in strands 7 and 8?
- What information is available from *Assessment for learning* in assessment focuses (AFs) 3 and 6?
- What does tracking of children's progress over time reveal about particular aspects of language comprehension where progress is slow?

Teaching

- Where in my planning or other notes can I find information about my teaching of reading, particularly strands 7 and 8?
- What have I taught so far this year?
- Are there any other ways I can reflect on the *content* (what I have taught children about reading) and *pedagogy* (approaches, methods and resources) I use?
- Which learning and teaching strategies are proving the most or least effective?
- How do I know that?

I need to use available evidence to identify patterns of unsatisfactory progress

- Which children are making age-appropriate progress in word recognition but not in language comprehension?
- Which children do not use inference to understand a text's meaning beyond the literal?
- Are there some children whose *listening* comprehension is better than their *reading* comprehension?
- Which children also have difficulty inferring or applying reasoning skills in other curriculum areas?
- Can the children speculate, justify their opinions and provide evidence for their responses in any other contexts, in literacy or other areas of the curriculum?

Step 2: Decide who you can work with to carry out the Lesson Study

I need to identify colleagues to work with me on the Lesson Study

- Have any other teachers identified the same issues about progress in reading comprehension in their own classes?
- Are any of these colleagues interested and willing to undertake a Lesson Study on this topic?
- Which combination of teachers involved would maximise the usefulness of the Lesson Study findings? (For example, teachers with pupils in Years 2, 3 and 4 could work together and add a focus on planning for progression or, in a large school, three Year 3 teachers could make up the Lesson Study Group.)

We need to establish the basis for the Lesson Study Group

- Has the headteacher agreed to our working arrangements and the dedicated time we need to undertake the Lesson Study, including planning, joint observation and review time?
- Does everyone understand and feel comfortable about what is involved in Lesson Study as an approach to continuing professional development (CPD): sharing ideas, being observed, observing and giving feedback?
- Do my colleagues in the group agree with my initial assessments and observations as the starting point for the Lesson Study?

Step 3: Agree on the focus, methods, roles and rules

We need to plan the process and methods for the Lesson Study

- What will be the outcomes? What are the questions we want to answer?
- How will we evaluate our success? What are our success criteria?
- What is the timeline? We will need a diary plan for planning, observations and review meetings.
- How will we record and share our observations and develop a learning log that captures the evidence of impact on children's learning?

We need to agree the roles and rules

- Who will teach the study lessons in which classes? Who else will be involved – for example, teaching assistants?
- Who will have access to any notes and records we keep?
- What information will we share with the children involved?
- How will we communicate our findings?
- How will we identify our personal professional development?

Step 4: Find out what has worked for other children and teachers

We need to build on best practice

- *What information can our colleagues contribute?*
What can they tell us about teaching strategies, learning approaches or resources that have worked well for them? Do they have any useful information to pass on about the ways they are using assessment to inform their teaching and accelerate progress in reading?

- *What can we learn from children in Year 3* about their understanding of the texts they read for a range of purposes? When they talk to us about their reading, does this reveal any additional evidence about their reading skills or knowledge?
- *What research evidence is available* on the internet or in other publications? Have there been any recent relevant studies internationally, nationally or locally? What do the findings or data add to our own evidence? Are any similar case studies available that might help us to avoid possible pitfalls during our research?
- *Which particular approaches* are beginning to emerge as the approaches we would like to build into our Lesson Study? How do we intend to maintain a balanced focus on learning *and* teaching? What level of preparation will be required for the lesson teaching and observation schedule before we undertake the study lesson?

Step 5: Decide on the focus group of children

We need to identify a focus group using the assessment data we gathered initially

We need to identify a focus group of four children in my class. Children in the focus group should have the same levels of reading attainment so that the first study lesson can focus on their learning during a guided reading session. (The Lesson Study Group may decide to observe the children's independent reading in a later study lesson.)

From the assessment and progress data I gathered initially, which four children:

- are making unsatisfactory progress in reading comprehension?
- find it difficult to infer meaning or speculate?

- rarely justify their opinions and responses by referring to examples in the text?
- represent a good range – for example, in terms of reading behaviours/ attitudes and prior attainment/progress?

We need to establish that the focus group is appropriate for the Lesson Study

- How can we check the children's current levels of skill, knowledge and understanding?
- What kind of questions will we ask them to obtain the information we need? (Talk to the children about their reading. Identify their strengths and which gaps in their skills or understanding are limiting their progress.)
- As a result of these discussions, do we need to select a different child/different children and repeat the checks?
- Before the Lesson Study Group plans the Lesson Study in detail for our focus group, are we in agreement about the assessment profile we have drawn up for each of the four children, in the aspects of reading that the Lesson Study will focus on?
- Do we all feel that we have captured a secure, accurate and well-rounded picture of each child's attainment and progress as the starting point for our observations?
- What reading targets for the focus group will we use when planning, teaching and observing the first study lesson?

Step 6: Together plan a study lesson with the focus group in mind

We need to plan the first study lesson: what do the children need to learn next and how will this be taught?

Learning

- What do the four assessment profiles indicate each child should learn next if they are to make progress in their reading?
- How will the learning objectives be shared with the children?

Teaching

- What does our information tell us about the most effective way(s) to teach these learning objectives?
- What needs to be changed or be approached differently?
- Do any aspects of teaching require increased emphasis, range or precision?
- Which are the most appropriate resources?

Planning

- How will the study lesson:
 - address the questions we want to answer?
 - build on discussions, the assessment profiles and the Primary Framework, to plan the specific learning for the focus children in this lesson?
 - introduce or adapt some of the researched ideas and practices?
 - set out what each child in the focus group is expected to learn in the lesson?

- identify new approaches, expected outcomes from these innovations and any associated risks?
- include guidance for the observers on what to look for and how to record their observations?

Step 7: Teach and together observe and assess the learning of the focus group

We need to gather and review evidence that will help us find out what and how the children in the focus group learn during the study lesson, what progress they make and what barriers to learning they encounter

During the lesson

Teaching

One member of the Lesson Study Group teaches the planned lesson, ensuring that the children in the focus group are actively involved in the shared reading *and* participate in guided reading.

Observation

The remaining members of the Lesson Study Group record their observations of the children in the focus group as agreed beforehand. Observations recorded should match the planned areas for discussion in the post-lesson review.

(Suggestions are provided below.)

After the lesson

Review

- How did the involvement, response and progress of the focus group children compare with the rest of the class?
- How did the group engage, and interact with other children and with the literacy activities?
- Was the lesson content (e.g. texts or activities) at the right level for each child in the focus group?
- What did they achieve? What progress did they make?
- Does their progress match the progress planned for and predicted?
- Is there any evidence that the children connected their new learning with prior learning?
- Do the focus group understand what they are learning and why it will be useful?
- What are the behaviour patterns of the focus group (on/off task, persevering/giving up, working quickly/slowly, talking/misbehaving, collaborating/independence)?
- Which activities or phases of the lesson engaged and challenged the focus group? Which did not?
- Which of the innovations were most effective and had most impact on the children's progress?
- Did any of the anticipated risks have a negative effect on learning?

Step 8: Together review learning in light of the planned learning outcome

The Lesson Study Group needs to analyse the information gathered during the study lesson, as well as additional information from the lesson review, to evaluate how successfully the children learned. This will mean discussing the lesson with the children in the focus group and meeting to discuss the lesson observations in detail as soon after the lesson as possible

What did we find out?

- What do our recorded observations and post-lesson discussion lead us to hypothesise about the children's learning during the lesson?
- What have we learned about what worked and what did not?
- Are there any tentative conclusions we can come to at this stage?
- What else do we need to find out? Is there any important evidence that we are missing out on because of the approaches we are using to teach the lesson or observe it?

What progress are we making towards answering our initial questions?

- After returning to our original questions and observation schedule and considering the outcomes of the study lesson, what do we need to focus on next?
- Are there ways that we could usefully extend our research?
- Do we need to revise or reframe our enquiry questions or create new ones?

- How can we test our hypotheses during the next study lesson?
- What information needs updating in the focus group's assessment profiles?
- What is the most efficient way to manage all the information we have collected so far?

Step 9: Together plan, teach and observe further study lessons

We need to plan the next lessons that will be used for Lesson Study to extend or explore our ideas, test our hypotheses, confirm our conclusions and build our evidence base

What do we need to update or change as we move through the process of discussion, collaboration, planning, teaching/observation and review?

We might consider the following:

- updating the Lesson Study Group's learning log;
- reviewing the membership of the focus group;
- adjusting our questions to inform the study lessons;
- refining our hypotheses about what improves children's reading;
- amending the targets for the focus group;
- changing the levels of support and scaffolding for the children's independent work;
- planning intervention in specific areas where progress was least evident;
- asking the focus group children what they've learned;
- updating our research to ensure we continue to innovate and build on best practice;

- acknowledging and valuing unexpected responses or negative outcomes so that we learn from them;
- finding a wider range of ways to collect evidence that can be analysed and shared after the lesson, e.g. audio, still or video recording.

Step 10: Decide how to share learning and disseminate the approach to others

We need to review our own learning, update our learning log and identify key findings to share with others

- How can we share our findings with colleagues so that our learning can have an impact on their practice?
- What do they need to know about the process we went through in the Lesson Study approach to CPD? What information will be useful to them from each of Steps 1 to 9?
- How can we present the information clearly and in different ways?
- How could we demonstrate the way that our case study in literacy has scope to show how this approach is relevant across the age range in our school and in other areas of the curriculum?

Next steps: Future continuing professional development activity

We need to decide where we want to go from here

- How successful was our presentation?
Which aspects could be improved when we undertake a similar activity in the future?

- What kind of support could we offer to colleagues who wish to use a Lesson Study approach themselves?
- Are there further areas of literacy learning and teaching we want to review and improve? How might we use a Lesson Study approach to address these?
- What would we do differently next time?
- Do we wish to continue working together as a Lesson Study Group, create a new group or use a different approach to CPD?
- How does the CPD we have undertaken inform the Performance Review process? What information does it add to our own CPD profile and future needs?