

Using a Lesson Study continuing professional development approach in literacy: Early reading (Year 1 comprehension)

Teacher's initial assessments and observation

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

Some children

Some children can retell the main events of a story in order but find it difficult to include detail about characters or ideas. They sometimes use basic story language ('There once was a...') but do not make use of the language or vocabulary of the text they have read or heard to add information or depth.

My concerns

They find it hard to:

- discuss events, characters and ideas;
- expand on their preferences and views about a text or compare one text with another;
- experiment with the key vocabulary used when they talk about a text – for example, 'I think *the slippery slithery snake* is going to eat all the hens because it says *that the slippery slithery snake is smiling secretly to himself.*'

Teacher's questions

- How can I encourage the children to *think about the characters and ideas* in stories as well as the main events?
- What do they need to learn in order to *notice and reuse new or significant words and phrases* that will help them talk about a text?
- Do the children have any gaps in their *skill or understanding as speakers* that are preventing them from discussing their reading?

Step 1: Analyse assessment and observation information to sharpen the focus

I need to build a picture of children's progress and attainment in Year 1 by gathering evidence

- What information is already available to help me make the best use of a Lesson Study approach to accelerate progress in Strand 1 (Speaking) and Strand 8 (Engaging with and responding to texts) for a focus group of children?

Learning

- What information do I have about progress and attainment over time?
- What information is available from day-to-day assessment?
- Is there evidence that the same children can *discuss ideas*, *expand on their views* or apply *new vocabulary* in any other contexts that I can draw on? For example, do they know the basic vocabulary of discussion ('I think that... I do not agree... I think so because... Look here, where it says...') and are they confident enough to talk in front of others?

Teaching

- What *models of spoken language for talking about story details* do I currently provide for my class?
- What does my planning show that might help me to reflect on *what I have taught the children so far about story characters*?

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

- Which colleagues are interested and willing to undertake a Lesson Study on this topic?

We need to establish the basis for the Lesson Study Group

- Has the headteacher agreed to the arrangements and time needed?
- Does everyone understand and feel comfortable about what is involved?

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

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

- What questions do we want to answer?
- What are our success criteria?
- What is the timeline?
- How will we record observations and produce a learning log?

We need to agree the roles and rules

- Who will teach the study lessons?
- Who else will be involved?
- Who will have access to our notes?

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

We need to build on best practice

- *What information can colleagues contribute? Are there teaching and assessment strategies or resources that have worked well for them?*
- *What can we learn from children in Year 1? Does discussion with them reveal any additional evidence?*
- *What research evidence is available on the internet or in publications?*
- *Which particular approaches are beginning to emerge as the approaches we would like to build into the Lesson Study?*

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 three children in my class. Children in the focus group should have the same levels of reading attainment so that the study lesson can focus on their learning in guided reading.

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?
- Do we need to select a different child/different children and repeat the checks?
- Are we in agreement about the assessment profile for each child?
- What learning targets will we use for the focus group when planning, teaching and observing?

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 assessment profiles indicate each child should learn next to enable them to make progress in engaging with and responding to texts and in talking about their responses?
- 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?

Planning

- How will the study lesson:
 - address the questions we want to answer?
 - build on our discussions and on the assessment profiles?
 - draw on 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

The focus group reviews the outcomes of the focus group:

- What did the children achieve?
- What progress did they make?
- Which activities engaged and challenged them? Which did not and why?
- Which innovations were effective and had the most impact on progress?

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 as possible after the lesson

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 did and did not work?
- 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 for teaching the lesson or observing 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 our questions or create new ones?

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- How can we test our hypotheses during the next study lesson?
- What information needs updating in the 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:

- reviewing the membership of the focus group;
- amending the children's targets;
- planning intervention in specific areas (for example, developing children's vocabulary);
- updating our research;
- working out what we can learn from any negative outcomes;
- identifying a wider range of ways to collect evidence.

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 we might 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?