

National Low-Attainers Pilot (LAP)

Little Ilford School: A cross-curricular literacy programme

The school is a mixed 11–16 comprehensive with a roll of 1302, over 50% of whom are entitled to free school meals. It is a multi-ethnic school, with 89.1% of the pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds.

The LAP pilot is a part of whole-school development but its implementation is integral to the school improvement plan, not separate from it, at this school. At the start of the year the school first implemented a fourth period for English, as an intervention period. The extra period for level 3 pupils subsumed one lesson of the literacy progress units (LPUs), material from *Reading Challenge* (Ref: 0293-2003) and *Writing Challenge* (Ref: 0314-2003). Pupils studying the LPUs, including the LAP level 3 learners, were still withdrawn for another period. Teaching assistants, under the supervision of a senior teaching assistant and the literacy and learning coordinator, delivered material from *Reading Challenge* and *Writing Challenge*. LPUs were delivered by English teachers and other trained staff.

As part of a whole-school drive to improve teaching and learning, the school identified the need to improve transferability and the reinforcement of skills from the LPUs into other subject areas. This problem has been addressed this school year through the whole-school writing project, which has focused particularly on the transferability of non-fiction writing skills. The first step was to train a specialist writing team during the autumn term who would then deliver whole-school INSET later in 2006. They adopted a staged approach for moving staff forward coupled with a rigorous monitoring schedule with strong support from LA consultants. They started with whole-staff INSET during which all staff were tasked with planning a specific lesson using the techniques identified for use with all Year 7 classes in a specified week in the summer term. This was then to be evaluated and followed up by the team working with departments and individual teachers using modelling, coaching and scaffolding techniques in order to develop and embed good consistent non-fiction writing across the whole school.

One such session was written by the team and delivered by the head of English, supported by the rest of the English department. The session lasted about 90 minutes and was run as a whole-school twilight INSET. In the first part of the session, the staff were introduced to eight writing skeletons or templates that all departments could draw on as a resource to support pupils when engaged in non-fiction writing specific to a subject area. Of the eight skeletons used, six were already familiar to pupils, if not the staff, as they are in standard use for the primary literacy strategy. The additional two skeletons were included having been designed to support more demanding writing skills such as evaluation and analysis. Various activities and interactive tasks were then used to familiarise staff with the various text types that pupils meet and how to support their writing in this area.

In subject areas staff identified the most common styles of writing required. This was a challenging exercise for some as they had never consciously identified specific writing styles and skills before or been required to plan how to support pupils in the writing process. The majority had always focused merely on the subject-specific content and knowledge required rather than the writing skill itself.

The head of English then modelled for the staff how to break down a piece of text into its component parts to provide structure and scaffolding for pupils when writing. Staff were then required to apply the technique to text commonly used in their own subject area. Finally they set about planning a writing exercise for their Year 7 classes using the frameworks provided.

Overall, the school has created a climate for change in which all staff are fully supported and involved. They appreciate the need to improve literacy skills in their own subjects and the contribution this makes to whole-school improvement. The intervention programme has been more coordinated this year and will be improved still further next year.