Essex LA strategy support teacher programme: Using Lesson Study to improve practice and progression

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Chapters

Introduction

What were your reasons for doing this type of development work?

Essex found difficulty in recruiting enough leading teachers to support the National Strategies, so instead recruited over 20 good/outstanding teachers recommended by consultants and School Improvement Advisers. These were called Strategy Support Teachers.

A Lesson Study model was adopted because it is collaborative, non-judgmental and very effective in addressing pupil underperformance. It encourages reflection on learning and teaching by all involved, which makes for sustained professional development.

The authority wanted to try a different strategy for supporting the development of learning and teaching at grass roots level.

Who might find this case study useful?

- Head of school improvement
- Headteacher
- Middle leader
- National Strategies consultant
- Senior leadership team (SLT)
- SIP (School Improvement Partner)
- Subject leader
- Teacher

Contacts

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School or setting

School: 50 primary phase schools in Essex
Type of school: Primary, Junior
Local Authority: Essex
Region: East of England
Free school meals: Less than 20%

Learners

Year groups: Year 5, Year 6
Gender: Both
Performance: Below age-related expectation
Whole school: No
People involved: LA adviser, Teacher
Number of classes: 50
Number of adult learners: 100+

What

What specific curriculum area, subject or aspect did you intend to have impact on?

- English - reading
- English - speaking and listening
- English - writing
- Mathematics

How did you intend to impact on pupil learning?

We were trying to improve aspects of pupil learning that were identified during observation of the target pupils; this varied across the contexts. The vehicle for this was lesson study. For a rationale of lesson study see presentation below (part of a presentation given to headteachers). Also, see Models of CPD that work:
http://nationalstrategies.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/node/64851

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📄 Rationale and practice of Lesson Study

What were your success criteria?

- 50% of target pupils to make progress above the expected rate over the year (to improve on PSA targets by 1%, the LA needed 1 additional child in every school being supported to achieve age related expectations which was around 1 in 6 children or 17%).
- 90% of Strategy Support Teachers (SSTs) to complete the year's programme.
- 90% positive feedback from partner teachers/schools.

What information or data did you use to measure progress towards your success criteria?

- Observation outcomes
- Periodic teacher assessment
- Pupil consultation data
- Pupils' work
- Test results

What did you do? What teaching approaches (pedagogy) did you use to achieve the intended impact?

- Assessment for Learning (AfL)

Describe the teaching approaches you used

The teaching approaches used during the four lessons depended on contexts, but all involved assessment for learning: one of the teachers observed the target pupils while the other led the lesson; in the subsequent discussion, gaps and barriers to learning were identified. Planning focused on how to address these for those pupils, through whole class teaching, guided group work, etc. This cycle continued through the four lessons.

What did you do? What approaches to CPD and learning for adults were used?

- Lesson observation
- Lesson study
- Modelling
- Partnership teaching
- Training

Describe the CPD approaches you used

Essex created a structure for the SST programme to firm expectations and support the teachers involved. This was developed from a pilot the previous year. The 5-strong LA team leading this included consultants for Literacy, Mathematics and Teaching & Learning.

In July 08 Essex held a feedback meeting with the pilot SSTs and built their feelings and concerns into the 08-09 programme. It was felt that one of the positive aspects was that the SSTs were not leading teachers, just teachers in the same boat as their partners.

Essex's recruitment invitation asked for experienced Year 5 and 6 teachers with a history of good to outstanding teaching & learning in Maths and English. Of the original 20 SSTs in the pilot (excluding consultants taking that role) 12 stayed on and a further 38 were recruited, making 50 in all. A few were already leading teachers but most weren't. This was good capacity-building for the Authority as it provided another avenue of CPD for good teachers. The SST Programme was led by an area-based consultant in each area with consultants responsible for Leading Teachers having overarching responsibility. Again, capacity-building in terms of management and leadership.

In August 08 Essex began to identify the target schools. These were termed Partner schools, in keeping with the ethos of collaborative learning.

Essex developed its Leading on Improvement Agreement. This covers data collection, targets and protocols for working together (see below).

17 September – Strategy Support Teachers Initial Training Day. SSTs receive a full day's training: Maths: Overcoming Barriers 3-4; Writing; APP; lesson study; provided with a huge range of materials to support their role.

25 September 08 – Launch Day - Headteachers and teachers from both SST and partner schools invited to meet together. SSTs received a further half day's training while HTs and CTs from partner schools have input on the programme and the importance of lesson study to the model. Funding to be provided to schools clarified. Leading on Improvement Agreement discussed, targets agreed and protocols confirmed. Resources packs provided for schools and SSTs. (See 'SST Resources disk' below) Outline of Gap tasks provided for SSTs and partner teachers showing that they both have a responsibility - it's not one way. (See 'Gap Tasks' below)
Letter sent to headteachers confirming the year ahead, contact numbers, reminder about data collection and the universal offer of CPD.

Early October 08 – SST first visit to partner school (half day): agree expectations with class teacher meet and observe target group. Post-observation discussion to identify barriers and future actions identify pedagogical focus and plan First Study Lesson. (See 'Outline of first visit', below)

'Quality First' checklist for Mathematics and Literacy supported SSTs and partner teachers to evaluate their own performance (See below)

November 08 - First Lesson Study - SST at partner school (half day): deliver the lesson; make observations; discuss the impact on learning.

December 08 - Area Cluster Twilight Meeting (all SSTs and partners): all areas in respective CDCs; Assessing Pupils' Progress (APP) moderation; refine target group data.

January 09 - Area Cluster Twilight Training Update (SSTs only)

Late Jan – SST third visit to partner school (half day): meet and observe target group. Post-observation discussion to identify barriers and future actions, identify pedagogical focus and plan Second Study Lesson.

Early Feb 09 – Second Lesson Study - SST at partner school (half day): deliver the lesson; make observations; discuss the impact on learning & plan third lesson study.

After half term - Third Lesson Study - SST at partner school (half day): deliver the lesson; make observations; discuss the impact on learning & plan fourth lesson study.

March 09 - Area Cluster Twilight Meeting (all SSTs and partners): APP moderation; refine target group data; Partner teachers to carry out second Pupil Perception Survey with class.

April 09 - Fourth Lesson Study - SST at partner school (half day): deliver the lesson; make observations; discuss the impact on learning

June 09 - Feedback meeting to share what worked well, evaluate the programme, raise issues and suggestions and write up case studies of work done.

Moderation twilight sessions were held where the SST and their partner teacher brought along work from the focus group and levelled it against the APP guidelines.

Year 2009-10 (Relevant files below are dated 09-10)

Not just Y5-6, this year Y3-Y6.

Two-way Partner school visits: 3 visits of partner teacher to SST teacher's school were included (observations in range of classes, climate walks, etc), in addition to the 6 SST visits. Funding available for 9 visits in all. headteachers also visited each other in some cases (unfunded). So many visits was not popular with SST's pupils' parents, but it the extra visits are flexible, not essential.

Funding: Release of funding in 4 stages, once data received: October, December, March and Summer. This enabled the LA to know where children were making the most progress.

APP moderation sessions were funded half-days this year - better attended and better quality moderation.

Funding was attached for optional WWW case studies.

Sustainability: out of 50 partnerships, only 3 folded this year; schools have not wanted it to stop.

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- Gap Tasks
- Launch presentation 'Improving practice & progression through Lesson Study'
- Leading on Improvement Agreement
- Outline of first visit
- Pupil perception questionnaire - Maths
- Pupil perception questionnaire - Writing
- Quality First checklist
- SST Resources disk content - 3steps & 4steps leaflet
- SST Resources disk content - English
- SST Resources disk content - Maths
- APP moderation sessions 09-10
- Example visit note 09-10
- Model data collection pro-rorma 09-10
- SST timeline 09-10
- SST visit note guidance 09-10

What CPD materials, research or expertise have you drawn on?

Lesson study

- Improving practice and progression through Lesson Study: http://nationalstrategies.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/node/126431
- Senior Leadership Team CPD Day 4 (many resources on lesson study) http://nationalstrategies.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/node/175012

Mathematics:

- Overcoming Barriers – helping children move from level 3 to level 4: http://nationalstrategies.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/node/84818

Literacy:

- Support for Writing: http://nationalstrategies.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/node/102688
- Talk for writing: http://nationalstrategies.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/node/152632

Who provided you with support?

- Leading teacher

- Local authority staff
- Senior management

How were you supported?

- Funding for the release time of the SSTs was provided through the National Strategies.
- The commitment of headteachers and SLTs was essential to the facilitation of this programme in schools.

Impact

What has been the overall impact on pupil learning?

The learning of the target pupils has improved.

Thoughts you think are relevant to overall impact on learning

Teachers report that focusing closely on a small group of underachieving pupils, analysing accurately the barriers to their learning and having the resources on which to draw has enabled them to provide appropriate opportunities for learning that will accelerate progress.

Quotes you think are relevant to overall impact on learning

'I worked with 13 children last year in my group of schools. These were children who had been identified as borderline level 3/4 children. Out of the 13 children I worked with, one gained a level 5, 9 children gained L4s and one missed the L4 by one mark. So basically 12 out of the 13 targeted children got at least a L4.' (SST)

Quantitative evidence of impact on pupil learning

- Periodic teacher assessment

Qualitative evidence of impact on pupil learning

- Observation outcomes
- Pupil consultation data
- Pupils' work

Describe the evidence of impact on pupil learning

APP (Assessing Pupils' Progress) was used, with data collected at points during the year. This pupil progress data shows significant improvement in performance:

- 98 Year 6 pupils supported in either writing or maths: 52% achieved level 4+
- 57 Year 5 pupils supported in either writing or maths: 65% achieved or exceeded age related expectations
- 6 Year 4 pupils (a pilot group for the 09-10 programme) supported in maths: 83% achieved or exceeded age related expectations
- 161 pupils supported in either writing or maths: 58% achieved or exceeded age related expectations (an increase of 3% on last year).

In writing:

- 53% achieved/exceeded age related expectations (46% at Year 6; 64% at Year 5)
- 23% exceeded age related expectations (14% at Year 6; 36% at Year 5).

Pupils achieved an average of 4.1pts progress each in writing Point scores and NC levels: 1 level = 6pts; expectations at KS2 are for 3pts in a year (half a level), since pupils are expected to make one level's progress in two years. For more on point scores and sublevels, see http://nationalstrategies.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/node/169974).

In Mathematics:

- 65% achieved/exceeded age related expectations (62% at Year 6; 67% at Year 5; 83% at Year 4)
- 30% exceeded age related expectations (26% at Year 6; 33% at Year 5; 50% at Year 4).

Pupils achieved an average of 3.9pts progress each in mathematics.

Mathematics – data collected for 72 pupils of 100+ supported (available data at time of going to print). Please see attached file below for a more detailed explanation of pupil level progress.

Qualitative evidence is present in reports from SSTs. See associated case studies (links to these are on Summary page)

Upload

📄 Detailed analysis of pupil progress data

📊 Strategy Support programme - detailed analysis of 08-09

📊 Strategy Support Programme Analysis cohort year-on-year SST schools 07-09

What has been the impact on teaching?

Both SSTs and partner teachers claim their practice has improved as a result of this lesson study programme. All teachers involved report significant increases in confidence. In one partner school (Hard to Shift) one Year 6 teacher moved from satisfactory to consistently good, as reported by the LA through the review process, and the school achieved 77% L4+ and 29% level 5s in mathematics, their highest results ever and more than double last year's results. This teacher is now taking on the role of SST informally in her own school in order to support the development of other staff through lesson study.

In the Year 4 pilot group, which achieved astounding results, the teacher, due to retire in Summer 09, commented, "If I had had support like this at the beginning of my career, I would have been a different teacher." She has decided to postpone her retirement and support other teachers in her school through lesson study.
In one school with serious weaknesses, the SIA commented "The SST programme is the only that's working in here at the moment."
Headteachers of both SST and partner schools report improvements in pedagogy, planning and more accurate assessment and all agree that the programme strengthens teachers' confidence.

A by-product of the SST moderation meetings was the spread of APP moderation practice to other schools: one of the schools that received an SST organised a cluster meeting at their school on the same principle and did the same thing with colleagues from local schools - and SSTs were invited to come along and support groups with moderating, which they did.

Thoughts you think are relevant to impact on teaching

'Lesson study is one-to-one tuition for teachers.' Gill Haysham (Responsible for the development of Leading Teachers in Essex LA)

Quotes you think are relevant to the impact on teaching

From SSTs:

'Feedback I received included: "having someone to bounce new ideas off really helped me improve my practice and it also helped the LSAs in the class as they were able to see the SST model effective strategies for guided work and also how to teach the progression in informal methods." It was a really positive experience for both the schools and myself. We are using the Lesson Study approach with teachers in my own school as it is proving to make such a difference, I am also working with Y5/Y6 teachers handing on what I am learning working with others as a SST.' (SST)

'As an SST I received really high quality training in the latest developments in mathematics and literacy. I was shown software that I had not seen before such as the Overcoming Barriers CDRom.

'This training then had a positive impact on the school I work in because as a direct result of the training we now have quality working walls that impact positively on the pupils' learning – both in maths and literacy. We are also now using the software with our 3/4 borderline pupils. This means that from this quality training 11 other teachers have had their practice changed – that affects 317 pupils.

'I think if your practice has been identified as good enough to take part in the scheme then it is essential that you are updated so that you are aware of the latest developments- this happened really effectively.' (Iain Gunn, Headteacher and SST, St Peter's Southweald)

'With regards the schools that I am working in, I think the real benefit is that anything you do has has joint ownership so that there is no blame if things do not work. This way of working is unthreatening and allows the teachers to take risks. Both schools that I have worked in have been very welcoming and ready to go as soon as I walked in because the authority had spent time setting boundaries and explaining roles to both the SST and the schools. This really helped. 'On a personal note I have found this incredibly rewarding experience. To be able to work with other professionals who lacked in confidence at the start and then to model practice that I really believed in to them and see them take it on board is a great sense of achievement.' (SST)

'The real power of the programme is the sustainability of it. Last year I worked with the teacher but mostly with a group; this had really positive results for the group who all made great progress. However, this year's model still concentrates on a group but really focuses on changing the practice of the teacher. This will, therefore, have a long term benefit for the school because they will have the skills to carry on the teaching methods after our support finishes. I am finding that the teachers I work with are then sharing the ideas with other colleagues in the school so it is like a positive ripple effect. This means it is not just a quick fix for 6 pupils.' (SST)

'From Partner teachers:'

'Personally I enjoyed having someone to discuss the issues with and get advice from and found this most beneficial to improving my practice. We would definitely like to have this support again if it was made available. I am going to be working with Y3/Y4 next year, so I won't get the benefit of your support, but the literacy subject leader will have a year 5/6 class and I'm sure she would be so pleased to have the support of a SST.
Thank you so much!' (Partner Classteacher)

'Having the opportunity to work with an SST teacher has had a positive impact on my teaching and classroom practice. I am in the early stages of my career and it has given me the opportunity to observe and trial effective techniques that are different to those I currently use.

The SST has provided me with the support and confidence needed to reassess some of my teaching approaches in order to meet the needs of my children effectively. For me working with an SST is not about learning the right way to do something but a two way process – exchanging ideas and trialling approaches that are realistic for my school and pupils.

'I have also spoken to other SST teachers who see this as a great career opportunity as a toe in the water of being an AST or consultant later.' (Teacher in 2nd year, supported by an SST who happened to work in her own school.)'

'The reciprocal observations are so useful, we find out about individual children; teaching was just not impacting on some children, they were disengaged. You have a chance to analyse why, you begin to understand and address the reasons.' (SST)'

Evidence of impact on teaching

- Evidence from observation and monitoring
- Evidence from planning
- Teacher perceptions

Describe the evidence of impact on teaching

See associated case studies (links to these are on Summary page).

What has been the impact on school organisation and leadership?

Many schools are intending to use lesson study in future as an effective means of professional development.

Also, as a result of the Leading on Improvement Day 4 CPD for Headteachers, enquiries about the programme have increased and more schools are eager to come on board. By the end of next year, the authority will have rolled out lesson study using this programme to around 200 junior phase schools across the county, around 50% of the total number of primary/junior schools.

Headteachers are becoming much more aware of the significant impact that lesson study has on teacher development and many see this as a more cost effective model of long term collaborative CPD.

Schools providing an SST are also able to demonstrate impact beyond their own school, in the wider learning community. Schools are beginning to create strong partnerships.

Thoughts you think are relevant to overall impact on school organisation and leadership

For schools that have had enough of being 'done to', this approach offers real possibilities - the school is an equal partner from the outset.

Evidence of impact on school organisation and leadership

6 of our 50 SSTs went on to gain Deputy Headships at the end of the programme.
A further 6 have become fully fledged Leading Teachers.
Subject Leaders and Senior Leadership recognise that facilitating the support can be more powerful than providing the support itself. Teachers' CPD becomes self-managing as it is focused on improving the learning rather than addressing issues with teaching.

Summary

What is the crucial thing that made the difference?

- The collaborative, equal nature of the lesson study approach - reciprocal visits, teaching, observation, analysis, planning.
- The close focus on the learning of targeted pupils.
- The support of senior leadership teams in facilitating the programme with their teachers.
  Funding from the National Strategies.

What key resources would people who want to learn from your experience need access to?

- lesson study materials (links to these are provided in previous sections)
- mathematics and English subject specific materials (links to some of these are provided in previous sections)
- APP materials: familiarity with the criteria is essential and regular moderation and standardisation meetings are crucial to accurately identifying barriers to learning.

What CPD session and resources were particularly useful?

- initial days' training for SSTs
- support materials from the National Strategies, eg Overcoming Barriers suite and writing materials
- APP moderation and standardisation sessions.

If another individual or school was attempting to replicate this work, where would they start and what would the essential elements be?

- read 'Improving Practice and Progression through Lesson Study'
- be open and positive about APP
- be reflective and open to adapting classroom practice and try out ideas that may be new to you
- ensure that Headteachers are supportive.

What further developments are you planning to do (or would you like to see others do)?

Next year we plan to extend the programme to all of Key Stage 2, rather than just Year 5 and 6.

Case study status

Approved

Coordinator

Lorraine Dawes

Related case studies

Essex lesson study: Improving learning in mathematics Essex lesson study: Year 4 mathematics – Problem solving Essex Lesson Study - Improving writing using Talk for Writing non-fiction texts Essex Lesson Study: Improving writing through interactive learning/teaching with an emphasis on ICT Essex Lesson Study - Developing the Lesson Study model within School Essex LA Strategy Support Teacher: Using mentoring/coaching to improve practice and attainment

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