ENHANCING WRITING SKILLS IN CHILDREN

Handwriting and Spelling in Primary and Secondary school

Introduction

Professor Vince Connelly Psychology
Writing Research Programme.

Recent milestones:

2007 Current Trends in Writing Conference for Teachers
2009 “Profiling writing in children with specific language impairment.” project funded by Leverhulme Trust
2010 “Writing difficulties encountered by children with dyslexia.” project funded by Waterloo Foundation
2011 “Developing evidence-based practice through use of a developmental model of writing.” funded by the ESRC
2012 Teachers Workshops and Conference Programme
   Development of Curriculum Based Measurement Writing Assessment
Writing Research Programme.

Recent milestones:

SLI project: Working with 25 Schools across SE England
ESRC project: Working with 18 Schools in partnership.
3 x Twilight Conference sessions at Brookes.

Presentations on our work to
British Dyslexia Association International Conference
‘Assessing writing difficulties’ European Training School, Padova, Italy.
EARLI SIG Writing Conference in Portugal
COST EU Conference on Writing in Macedonia and in France
Child Language Disorders Symposium in USA
Handwriting Conference UK
9 x Oxfordshire Schools & Oxfordshire LACAT
Research on writing difficulties

• Significant minority of children struggle to acquire basic competence in text production
• Majority of children with writing difficulties are in mainstream classes
• Many different experiences/problems in writing that lead to the poor writing and poor composition

• Single behavioural outcome but different pathways
• Interventions based on single models not necessarily effective
Writing difficulties: Teacher knowledge and needs

Considerable variation in the time teachers allocate to writing instruction (Cutler & Graham, 2008)

40% make no adaptations for struggling writers (Graham, Murphy et al., 2008)

Limited handwriting & spelling instruction after early Primary schooling (Barnett et al, 2006; Graham et al, 2008)

Teachers report being inadequately prepared to teach writing
Spelling & Handwriting skills

• Recognised as a key issue for pupils struggling with literacy (Rose, 2009)


• Problems with basic skills in writing (spelling & handwriting) remain a key predictor of compositional quality through adolescence and into adulthood (Richardson & Wydell, 2009; Suddarth et al, 2012).

• Lack of fluency in transcription skills associated with avoidance of writing (Berninger et al, 1991)

• Pupils with lower initial attainments in writing are less likely to benefit from interventions in secondary school (Myhill et al, 2012)
Dear Sir,

I would like a detached house with two bathrooms. One 10m by 5m living room. Also a kitchen 8m by 2m with six cupboards, made by hand, thick wood. Five bedrooms. Four of them with double beds and one with a single bed. In every bed room I would like a door on every room and a cupboard in every bedroom. In the kitchen also a double cooker with a grill (a electric cooker please).

On stairs I count my kitchen and three bedrooms with my living. Upstairs I would like one bathroom and the other three bedrooms and my one of bolting room.

I hope to see you in for further rooms.
Evidence of lack of progress at school…

Dockrell, Lindsay & Connelly (2009)

WOLD Composition Z Scores Age 11-16

Handwriting fluency scores on the alphabet task at age 16 predicted the decrease in WOLD composition scores.

The less fluent the handwriting then the more likely to show a decrease in composition over time.
A Developmental framework

Text generation: words, sentences and discourse

Transcription: handwriting/typing and spelling

Executive functions: planning, reviewing and revising

Simple view of writing derived from Berninger and Amtmann (2003: 350)
Improving Handwriting

Christensen (2005) Intervention to improve the speed of handwriting in secondary school students

- One group received handwriting speed instruction
- One group received equivalent time writing in a journal

Figure 2. Means for both groups at pre- and post-test on length of written text

Figure 3. Means for both groups at pre- and post-test on quality of written text
Improving Spelling

• Berninger et al, 1998

• Sample of 128 seven year olds in the US

• Intervened with twice weekly 20 minute sessions on improving spelling for 12 weeks. Focused on alphabetic principles and High Frequency words.

• Embedded use of new words in compositions as part of the spelling intervention.

• Raised not just spelling but also had a wider impact on composition quality and in particular number of words written in classroom compositions.
Recent Project

“Using a developmental model of writing to inform evidence based practice.”
Economic & Social Research Council Knowledge Exchange Follow on Fund

Working with teachers to identify any problems they have with the teaching of writing.

1) Workshops
2) Conference
3) Website
4) Dissemination of information
5) New Assessment Tools (CBM)
Programme of Events.

4.30 pm  An introduction to the Teaching of Handwriting and Spelling  Vince Connelly

4.55 pm  Research into Handwriting and Spelling  Emma Sumner,

5.15 pm  Handwriting Practice and Measuring Speed of Handwriting  Anna Barnett,

5.35pm  Question and Answer Session

5.45pm  Break for canapés and tea/coffee

6.10 pm  Teachers Talking about Writing  Magdalena Olofsson, Year 6 Teacher

6.30 pm  Using Curriculum-Based Measurement of writing in the classroom to monitor progress in writing  Julie Dockrell, Institute of Education, London

6.55 pm  Handwriting to Writing: one leap or many hops? Angela Webb

7.20 pm  General Discussion /Question and Answer Session
What’s in the bag?

Research Reviews:
“Informing writing through assessment”

CBM manual
References/Writing Packages in Common Use in Schools
Developmental Model

Publishers Materials
Yellow Evaluation Sheet

Michel Fayol Presentation
Welcome!

Learning to write is a complex skill. Children often struggle with learning to write and for children with learning difficulties writing can be particularly challenging. To develop as fluent, accurate and creative writers children need the opportunity to practice different components of the writing process.

Enhancing Writing Skills in Children - Workshops

We are currently running a series of workshops looking at writing development in Key Stage 2. These workshops are with our project partners and other professionals within education. The aim of these workshops is to develop ways in which teachers can monitor children’s writing to enhance learning and attainment.

Oral Language and Writing

From 2009-2011 we conducted a longitudinal project that aimed to identify which aspects of the writing process are critical for which children at which developmental phases. We are particularly interested in the role that oral language places in developing writing skills. We are currently analysing the results from this study. These findings will feed into our workshop series. When the project is complete we should be able to develop appropriate support strategies for pupils.

If you would like more information about either of these projects then please contact us directly: EWSC@brookes.ac.uk
EWSC Website

SLI Project Feedback
The data collection phase of the SLI project is now complete, so we are now in the process of feeding back to the schools. If you would like to know about some of our results then please take a look at this presentation. Further information and feedback about the project will be posted here as we continue to analyse the data.

Conference Presentations
Results from some of our on-going research projects into children's writing skills were presented in September 2010 at the EARLI SIG: Writing conference in Heidelberg.

To have a look at the accompanying slides please click on the pdf icons below.


Recent Publications

Book Chapters

Programme of Events.

4.30 pm  An introduction to the Teaching of Handwriting and Spelling  Vince Connelly

4.55 pm  Research into Handwriting and Spelling  Emma Sumner

5.15 pm  Handwriting Practice and Measuring Speed of Handwriting  Anna Barnett

5.35pm  Question and Answer Session

5.45pm  Break for canapés and tea/coffee

6.10 pm  Teachers Talking about Writing  . Magdalena Olofsson, Year 6 Teacher

6.30 pm  Using Curriculum-Based Measurement of writing in the classroom to monitor progress in writing  Julie Dockrell, Institute of Education, London

6.55 pm  Handwriting to Writing: one leap or many hops? Angela Webb

7.20 pm  General Discussion /Question and Answer Session