

## ENHANCING WRITING SKILLS IN CHILDREN

Children's writing in the transition from primary to  
secondary school

Introduction

Professor Vince Connelly  
Psychology



E·S·R·C  
ECONOMIC  
& SOCIAL  
RESEARCH  
COUNCIL

## 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.**

**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 Oxfordshire Schools & Oxfordshire LACAT**

## 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 (Barnett et al, 2006; Graham et  
al, 2008)

Teachers report being inadequately prepared to teach writing

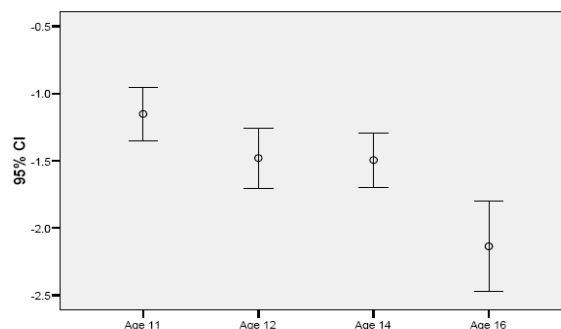
## School Transition & Writing skills

- Recognised as a key issue for pupils (Bew, 2011)
- Pupils with lower initial attainments in writing are less likely to benefit from interventions in secondary school (Myhill et al, 2012)
- 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).

## Evidence of lack of progress at school...

Dockrell, Lindsay & Connelly (2009)

WOLD Composition Z Scores Age 11- 16



Children with Specific Language Impairment

## 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)



## A Developmental framework

Text generation: *words, sentences and discourse*

Working  
memory\*

Transcription: *handwriting/typing  
and spelling*

Executive functions: *planning,  
reviewing and revising*

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

## Programme of Events.

- 4.30 Professor Vince Connelly. 'Teachers and Researchers Talking about Writing. An Introduction.'
- 4.45 Sheryl Holmes: Specialist Language and Communication Teacher 'Writing issues on transition for children with speech and language difficulties'..
- 5.00 Professor Rhona Stainthorp, 'Getting Ready to Write in Key Stage Three: What skills are important?'
- 5.40 Question and Answer Session
- 5.50 Break for canapes and coffee
- 6.10 Linda Kay, Advisory Teacher. Gloucester. 'Supporting the development of planning and organisation in Writing.'
- 6.25 Professor Vince Connelly. 'Using Curriculum-Based Measurement of writing in the classroom to monitor progress in writing.'
- 6.50 Debbie Grimond. 'Writing at KS3 - transition and the end game: Perspectives of a secondary school teacher'.
- 7.05. All speakers and the audience. General Discussion. Question and Answer Session.
- 7.30 Close with wine and nibbles in the foyer.

## What's in the bag?

### Research Reviews:

- "Writing Next"
- "Writing to read" or "Informing writing through assessment"
- "Word processing programs and weaker writers/readers."



### References/Writing Packages in Common Use in Schools Developmental Model

- Publishers Materials
- Evaluation Sheet
- Flyer for our next event

CBM manual at break

## EWSC Brookes Website

**OXFORD  
BROOKES  
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**EWSC - Enhancing Writing Skills in Children**

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**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](mailto:EWSC@brookes.ac.uk)

**E.S.R.C.**  
CHILDREN'S  
BROOKES  
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Oxford Brookes University | Department of Psychology  
This project is funded by the E.S.R.C. and The Leverhulme Trust

**The Leverhulme Trust**

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**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.

Dockrell, J.E., Connelly, V., Critten, S., Walter, K. (2011). The relationship between spelling and writing development in children with language difficulties. Society for Research in Child Language & Development. Madison USA.

Connelly, V., Dockrell, J.E., Critten, S., Walter, K. (2011). The writing difficulties of children with specific language impairment. British Dyslexia Association Conference, Harrogate, UK.

Connelly, V., Dockrell, J.E., Critten, S., Walter, K.W. (2011). Children challenged by writing: The writing difficulties of children with specific language impairment. Prozesse der Textproduktion in der Schule: Strukturen und Verarbeitung aus sprachdidaktischer und psycholinguistischer Perspektive. DGfS conference, Göttingen, Germany.

Dockrell, J.E., Connelly, V., Walter, K.W., & Critten, S. (2011) Using curriculum-based measurement to assess writing development. COST ERN-LWE Workshop, Potsdam, Germany.

Walter, K. (2011) Eye & Pen: An Introduction. Association of Technical Staff in Psychology Conference, Oxford, England.

Connelly, V., Critten, S., Dockrell, J., Walter, K. & Lindsay, G. (2010) Writing development in children with language difficulties and the influence of spelling skill. EARLI SIG-Writing conference, Heidelberg.

Dockrell, J., Connelly, V., Walter, K. & Critten, S. (2010) Using curriculum-based measurement to assess writing development. EARLI SIG-Writing conference, Heidelberg.

**Recent Publications**

**Book Chapters**

Connelly, V., Dockrell, J.E., Barnett, A. (2011). Children Challenged by Writing Due to Language and Motor Difficulties. In V. Berninger (Ed.) *Cognitive Psychology of Writing Handbook: Past, Present, and Future Contributions of Cognitive Writing Research to Cognitive Psychology*. Psychology Press.