

Research Briefing N° 25

The Case for a National Writing Project for Teachers

This research reviews the experience of the USA in developing and implementing a National Writing Project for teachers to inform the establishment of a similar project in the UK.

Key words: writing; teaching; USA; continuing professional development

Key findings



- The research found that the National Writing Project which has run in the USA from 1974 to the present is the most successful, sustained continuing professional development (CPD) project in the USA. It operates in over 200 centres, and is based on a simple formula: teachers of writing practise the art of writing in a wide variety of genres. They then form self-support groups to continue writing and discuss the teaching of writing.
- Results from independent evaluations show classrooms where teachers have engaged with the National Writing Project experience improved literacy progress for students at all ages in the American school system.

What we did

The research, commissioned by the CfBT Education Trust and carried out in 2008, was undertaken to take stock of developments in the USA in the field of the teaching of writing at school level to inform UK policy and practice.

The research resulted in a set of proposals for the establishment of a National Writing Project in the UK. Whereas in the USA, National Writing Project groups were set up during a long summer intensive programme, the UK model suggested a shorter summer programme followed by in-service courses during the teaching year.

In practice, no follow-up funding was provided to establish a National Writing Project for the UK, though work has been undertaken by the National

Association for the Teaching of English and a number of local authorities to establish a grassroots approach to the challenge.

How we did it

The research was a desk-based quasi-systematic literature review (specifically, an expert review). A set of inclusion and exclusion criteria were established to provide the parameters for the research review, which covered the period 1974-2008. Research published in English was accessed, most of it emanating from the USA. A set of expert interviews was undertaken to complement the literature review.

Further information

Andrews, R. (2008). The case for a National Writing Project for teachers. Reading: CfBT Educational Trust

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