

# Masters in Educational Practice (MEP)

Teacher Inquiry Portfolio



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

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The MEP inquiry projects are based on classroom practice and it's hoped they will inform current practice for all in the education sector and potentially identify areas for further research. All projects have been quality assured by the alliance members and we believe these projects deserve dissemination to as wide an audience as possible.

Alliance Members:



# What is the impact and manageability of using an intensive visual and repetitive spelling intervention over a 6 week period with nine year old children who have low attainment in spelling?

Sarah Brian

## Introduction

This study investigates the success of a spelling intervention based on repetition and visualisation. The intervention used the 'Look, Cover, Write, Check' system with each spelling being repeated nine times based on 'Miller's Law' (1956), that the working memory can remember seven plus or minus two pieces of information. The intention of the study was to raise the attainment levels of weak spellers in my mixed Year Four/Five class. This was centred around the instructional core, (Elmore, 2008) in order to raise student performance.

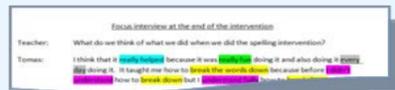
## Method

The intervention was implemented over a six week period. The focus was on six children, five boys and one girl, whose spelling scores were either less than 90 Standardised Score on assessments or who consistently spelt words incorrectly in their everyday written work. The group met for twenty minutes each day to practise and learn spellings taken from the Single Word Spelling Test book from GL Assessment (2015). The sessions took place in the classroom whilst the other children in class worked in reading or handwriting groups. All materials presented to the learners used the British Dyslexia Association guidelines on text type, and the colour paper. This was to ensure that all of the children could access the intervention regardless of any possible dyslexic tendencies.

## Data Collection

### Qualitative Methods:

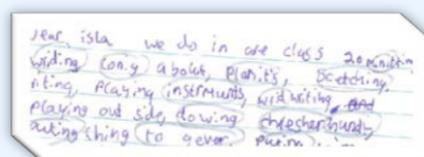
- Pupil Drawings
- Focus Group Interviews
- File Notes (gathered through observation)



### Quantitative Methods:

- Analysis of text
- Assessment Results Comparison

1	John	1
2	John	1
3	John	1
4	John	1
5	John	1



## Results:

The textual analysis showed that the intervention improved the everyday spelling of four out of the six pupils. With a mean progress of 14% from these learners. The comparison of standardised scores from the SWST demonstrated that only two of the pupils made progress.

Pupil	Feb	June
Bob	47%	24%
Matthew	15%	22%
Steve	17%	29%
Steven	7%	4%
Tiger Daisy	39%	18%
Tomas	34%	25%

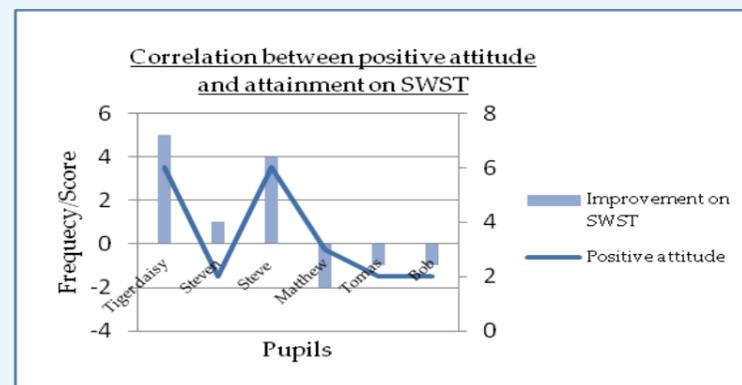
Percentage of errors made in an unassisted piece of work

Pupil	Feb	June
Bob	71	70
Matthew	94	92
Steve	92	96
Steven	84	85
Tiger Daisy	83	88
Tomas	81	80

Standardised scores taken from termly spelling assessments

## The importance of attitude to learning

Qualitative data was gathered in the form of observations and focus group interviews. Analysis of this information revealed a correlation between positive attitudes and attainment levels. The two pupils who consistently demonstrated a positive approach to the intervention were the two children who made the most progress in terms of their standardised scores on the SWST following the intervention.

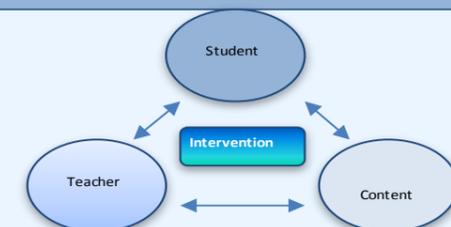


## Conclusion

The intervention did not prove significant in terms of raising attainment levels of low attaining spellers. What it did show, however, was a strong link between attitudes to learning and attainment levels. This is a valuable finding as it has shaped my understanding of the way in which I need to teach. I will inject a copious amount of enthusiasm into my teaching to ensure that my learners are engaged, happy and becoming eager learners. Alongside this I will promote a positive attitude to learning with a class motto of 'Be the best that you can be'. I have a greater understanding of spelling strategies that do not work and the importance of approaching spellings in a consistent manner that disregards the 'assign and test' method. I have begun development as a teacher researcher and value the importance of this in shaping me as a teacher leader. I have encouraged my colleagues to undertake research in areas of personal interest, such is the benefit of this process. As I progress through my career I intend to continue with research to ensure that I am providing the best education for my learners.

## Instructional Core – Final Impact Model

Three out of the six children from the focus group made quantifiable progress in terms of their assessment scores. Post intervention all pupils stated that it had been a positive experience that had provided them with strategies to assist them with spelling.



I now have a greater understanding of effective strategies to support children in spelling acquisition. I understand the importance of improving children's attitudes to learning in order to raise attainment. I also recognise the importance of being a 'Teacher Researcher' moving forward in my teaching career.

Having shared my findings with my colleagues I have implemented a spelling policy within my school that requires all teachers use the 'Look, Cover, Write, Check method'. This ensures that children are given opportunity to practise their spellings in school, throughout the week, prior to their weekly test.

## References

- Miller, G, 1956. The magical number seven, plus or minus two: some limits on our capacity for processing information. *Psychological Review*, [Online]. 63(2), 81-97. Available at: <http://psycnet.apa.org/journals/rev/63/2/81/> [Accessed 13 September 2015].
- GL Assessment – SWST
- Elmore, R, 2008. Improving the Instructional Core. *n Conversation*, [Online]. 11(3), 3-5. Available at: <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/policyfunding/leadership/summer2010.pdf> [Accessed 20 September 2015].