

Making the most out of Talk for Writing training

Rome wasn't built in a day. Talk for Writing Primary Adviser Maria Richards explains why you must invest time if you want to reap the potential benefits of Talk for Writing for your school.

According to Wikipedia, "*Rome wasn't built in a day*" is an adage attesting to the need for time to create great things. This is true of many things and is particularly true when thinking about developing Talk for Writing in your school. As with any new initiative that schools take on, sustainable change cannot happen after just one training day. Real transformation comes from a long-term plan for development, built on by continually evaluating the impact on teaching and learning and then planning future CPD and development as a result of that. Working in this way allows the initial and subsequent training to be sustained. If this doesn't happen, the clear danger is that the initial input and enthusiasm for the change will peter out.

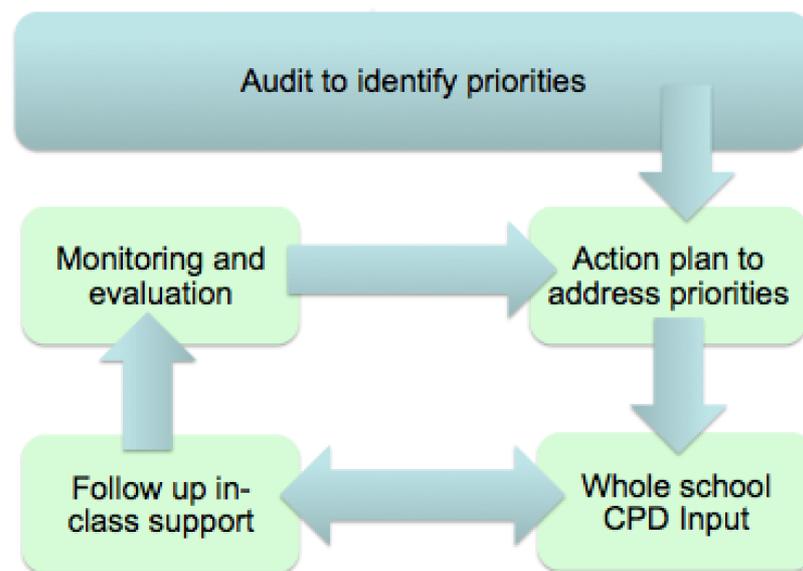
Why do some initiatives peter out?

Dictionary.com defines "**to peter out**" as *1. to diminish gradually and stop; dwindle to nothing.*

This is something that can happen quite regularly after CPD training days if that initial training is then not built upon. Think about how many initiatives your schools have taken on over the years. How many have been sustained and how many have petered out? For those that have fallen by the way-side, why was that? I can wager that one reason would be due to a lack of investment in time and focus on that change. The Teacher Development Trust cites that: *CPD is most effective in improving teachers' practice and pupils' achievement when it is sustained and evaluated. Most CPD by contrast, is fragmented and unevaluated.*

In order to really embed Talk for Writing in your school and see sustained improvement and impact on achievement, you have to keep working on it. An Introductory Inset day will get you going but from there you need to action plan how to sustain and grow staff knowledge

and pupil impact. In many of our workshops and on national conferences we allude to the CPD model for sustainability shown below.



How to ensure training leads to change

Here it is clear that a mixture of training, in-class support & coaching and continual monitoring & evaluation to guide next steps is how real change occurs. This all needs to be given time and driven by a strong leader(s) within the school. This way, the initiative eventually becomes the culture of the school and practice is transformed. Therefore, when thinking about CPD needs for Talk for Writing and requesting a training day, this must be considered. Real change cannot come from one session - you've had your first Inset, but what next?

A model for change

Having reflected on the many training days I have delivered and the many schools I have worked with over the years, it's the cycle of CPD training and in-school consultancy input that has made the difference between those schools who have thrived and those where change has diminished. An example of one successful model, used with a school at the start of their journey, looked like this across a year:

1. An introductory INSET on Talk for Writing (TfW) Fiction (delivered by consultant)

2. A period of time to try out techniques, stories, activities in class (TfW leads overseeing)
3. In-school planning workshops to move theory into practice and allow teachers to ask questions individualised to their context and class (consultant + TfW leads)
4. Delivery of planned units and evaluation of success and areas for development (TfW leads overseeing)
5. Surgeries with teachers to reflect on teaching and planning and address misconceptions and move staff forward (consultant+TfW leads)
6. Working with the TfW leads to formulate & resource the Long Term plan of texts across the school (consultant)
7. Book and planning audit to evaluate impact and plan next-steps in CPD (consultant +TfW leads)
8. In-class support and demo teaching for those staff who need development of certain aspects of the process (consultant or TfW leads on various days)
9. Whole staff training for the non-fiction Talk for Writing (consultant)
10. Repetition of steps 3,4,5,7 & 8 for non-fiction
11. Consultant & TfW lead continue to assess impact and evaluate the TfW sequence. From the audits, the next steps in developing CPD and support can be planned.

A flexible model

These models would all look slightly different depending on the school, the context and the expertise of the staff. However, whatever the context, I find the mix of training and in-school consultancy to be crucial,

all overseen by strong school and subject leadership driving change and improvement. The headteacher was present in all sessions above and was instrumental in keeping momentum. If you were to ask any of our Talk for Writing training schools, they will outline their years of consistent development of the Tfw process and their constant focus on improving and embedding it in response to their learners, driven by their leaders and responded to by staff.

Whatever your context and whatever your starting point, if you are considering implementing Talk for Writing, start with the training from a Talk for Writing trainer or training centre and then consider your long-term plan for implementation. That way you can successfully 'build your Rome' and achieve great things!

Maria is an experienced Literacy Consultant with a background in school improvement and raising standards. She has been involved in Talk for Writing for many years, delivering a variety of training and packages to embed Tfw into everyday practice. She has supported the development of Tfw across the UK and works with international schools around the globe. She is also part of the team that leads on Tfw in Australia. Contact Maria at maria.richards@talk4writing.com

