

Creative Writing in Schools

Executive Summary – February 2019

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In future, this evaluation recommends that creative writing programmes for children should mirror Paper Nations' and First Story's focus on idea formulation and exploration, over technical accuracy.

2) Young people writing less often than their peers at the beginning of CWiS wrote more often by the end of their involvement.

In future schools should proactively select pupils with little prior involvement or interest in creative writing for future activities and programmes (alongside pupils with higher levels of prior interest and engagement).

3) Creative writing networks played a vital role in bringing writers and schools together, and helping writers share knowledge, resources and opportunities. Cost and time are the biggest barriers to creative writing partnerships. So too is a lack of coordination among writers, which can mean some are not sure what their financial value is. This results in writers working for nothing, or too cheaply, putting downward pressure on many writers' wages.

"No one knows how much a writer is worth, you know. They really don't. They don't know whether it's worth £10 an hour or £100 an hour, and wildly differing payments are made."

Representative from a writing organisation

Networks can help tackle these burdens by offering schools and writers support, resources and brokerage. They can help writers share employment and funding opportunities, and clarify what writers should charge.

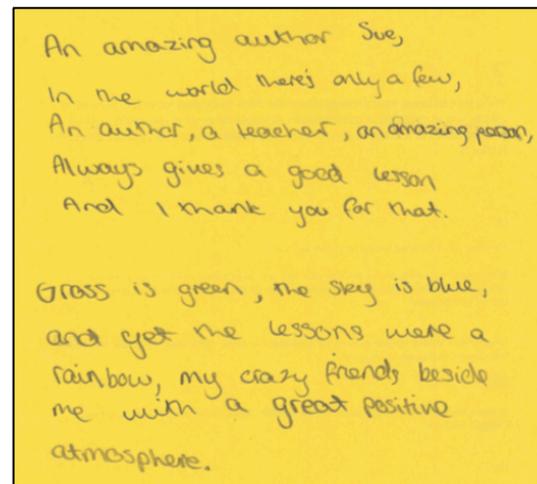
In future, this evaluation recommends that creative writing networks and organisations should learn from First Story and Paper Nations' good practice in supporting clear expectations (including around pay) between writers and schools, and sharing of teaching resources to reduce the time required to plan activities. Networks and organisations should discourage writers from working too cheaply or for free, and raise awareness among writers about the existing networks that can offer professional support.

4) CWiS programmes and activities helped many pupils feel more confident as writers, and in life. They found working with professional writers particularly valuable:

"[The writer] doesn't stop us from doing anything.... She'll let us try it, even if she knows it won't work out that well. ... Then she'll let us learn from our mistakes and do it [ourselves] but also be there to support us."

Young person during a focus group

Teachers also highlighted the way creative writing boosted pupils' confidence, both as writers, and in schools, as our case study of First Story's Writer-in-Residence programme shows:



Poem about the Writer-in-Residence workshops, written by a secondary school pupil



Drawing of a writer by a primary school pupil.

“The group have come on leaps and bounds with their creative writing and have found a fantastic outlet for their emotions and ideas.”

Teacher involved in First Story

In future, this evaluation recommends that programmes and activities supporting creative writing in schools should build on the elements of CWiS programmes and activities that young people and practitioners identified as most valuable, including: opportunities to work with professional writers; a focus on ideas generation and exploration, and; the careful scaffolding of written tasks.

- 5) Many teachers’ enjoyment of creative writing increased during CWiS**, and teachers said that activities had increased their confidence as writers (although, generally, it was teachers who felt initially confident teaching creative writing that reported feeling more confident by the end of a programme or activity). Teachers and writers also felt their repertoire of ideas for teaching creative writing grew, and some went on to share ideas and practice with colleagues:

“[Paper Nations] has opened up networks of influence, and models of practice, which I/we can use. It has taught me lots of exciting activities and made new opportunities.”

Writer involved in Paper Nations

Organisations supporting creative writers and creative writing in schools should make engaging with and supporting less confident teachers and writers a priority for future work, and enable young people and teachers to participate in the creative writing side-by-side where possible, focusing on writing for the sake of it over and above technical accuracy.



This report was written by the education and youth development 'think and action tank' LKMco. LKMco is a social enterprise - we believe that society has a duty to ensure children and young people receive the support they need in order to make a fulfilling transition to adulthood.

We work towards this vision by helping education and youth organisations develop, evaluate and improve their work with young people. We then carry out academic and policy research and advocacy that is grounded in our experience.

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Society should ensure that all young people receive the support they need in order to make a fulfilling transition to adulthood

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