Guidelines for the inclusion of adults with learning disabilities into literacy schemes

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Rationale

The recent Strategy For Equality Report of the Commission on the Status of People with Disabilities (June 1996) states that "Children and adults with disabilities must come in from the margins and education must be made equally available for everyone. "In the light of this and the Equal Status Act, (October 2000), inclusion will be required by law.

Increasingly adults with learning disabilities are wishing to avail of VEC literacy classes. This can be attributed to various positive developments for example:

• the unveiling of the literacy problem in Ireland and the open accepting and positive way with which it is now being dealt;

• the growth, development and increased publicity of the literacy movement and its work;

• the increased integration and inclusion in the community of people with learning disabilities;

• the greater empowerment of people with learning disabilities to identify and access the skills they require.

We welcome and acknowledge each of these developments but with all growth there must also be consolidation in order to ensure maximum benefit for all.

NALA's mission statement is to ensure all adults with reading and writing difficulties have access to high quality literacy provision. As part of our Strategic Plan we are committed to publish guidelines for literacy schemes working with people with a learning disability.

A Strategy for
EQUALITY

Report of the Commission on the
Status of People with Disabilities
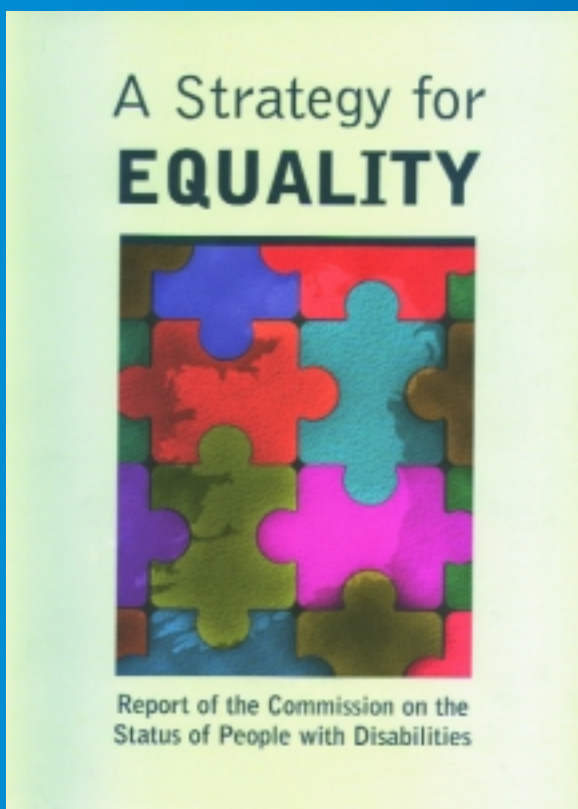
In England and Northern Ireland the Further Education (FE) Colleges which provide a wide range of adult education classes to the general public, also provide an extensive basic education programme for people with special needs. This closely resembles the programmes provided in Ireland by the literacy schemes. All students, including those wishing to join the basic education programme, have to complete an application form. In the case of students with learning disabilities who wish to attend and are supported by relevant agencies, the FE College makes contact with the agency to ensure the mutual support of both organisations.

Throughout Ireland there is huge variation between literacy schemes as to how they approach the issue of including people with general learning disabilities. Some schemes feel it is not their brief to include such students, while others have tutors specifically allocated to students with learning disabilities on both a one to one basis and in small groups. For many years the literacy service has been under-resourced but now with improved recognition, funding and increasing demand for inclusion there is a greater need to facilitate people with general learning disabilities.

Accordingly, there is an increasing demand for this situation to be structured and for guidelines to be developed which will introduce a standard of good practice throughout the literacy service. In response to this demand, in May 1999, the National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA) commissioned a consultant, Monica Macnamara, to draw up a set of guidelines. These guidelines incorporate the experience and expertise of those involved from both literacy schemes and learning disability agencies who are required to work together for the benefit of the student and satisfaction of all concerned. It is intended that the guidelines will provide a clear and helpful framework which individual literacy schemes, in conjunction with the relevant agencies, can fine tune to meet their particular needs and preferences and those of the student.

The Barriers to inclusion

In order to draw up guidelines which outline a clear strategy for inclusion of people with general learning disabilities, it was first necessary to identify the progress and the barriers experienced to date. At a discussion on this topic at the Adult Literacy Conference in Ennis, Co. Clare in May 1999, there was a clear interest in facilitating adults with learning disabilities. Some positive experiences and good ideas were noted. However, numerous barriers were also identified:

• no specific budget allocation for extra requirements such as materials and tutor training;

• lack of experience and training of tutors in relation to learning disability;

• lack of knowledge or access to suitable teaching materials;

• lack of communication between the learning disability agency and the literacy scheme;

• confusion regarding the role and responsibility of and relationship between the learning disability agency and the literacy scheme;

• fear of possible negative impact on other students;

• absence of an assessment system to ascertain ability or progress;

• no knowledge of where to start or what progress to expect;

• no timescale or structured evaluation and

• fear of inappropriate behaviour or communication problems.

These guidelines are intended to outline a strategy for inclusion which each literacy scheme, in conjunction with the relevant learning disability agency can fine tune to suit their needs and resources.

1. Each literacy scheme should identify how many places they can offer to adults with learning disabilities. The size of scheme, space, budget, suitable tutors available and demand should be taken into account. Suggestion: Approximately 5% of adults with literacy problems in Ireland have a learning disability. Each scheme could aim to provide a minimum of 5% of its places to adults with learning disabilities.

2. Literacy tutors should volunteer to work in this specialised area and not be coerced or pressurised. They should have or receive some basic training in working with adults who have learning disabilities and have access to suitable teaching materials. A database of materials and resources which have been found useful, should be developed. Additional support or expertise should be available for tutors who experience difficulties.

3. Places can be offered on a 1:1 basis, on a small specialised group basis i.e. a tutor working with 3 students all of whom have a learning disability or, where a student is capable, integrated into a larger mixed group.

4. In accordance with current practice for all students, when a student with a learning disability attends a literacy scheme the literacy organiser will complete an application form and general assessment with them. At this stage, further information may be required or some extra questions may need to be asked (See attached Application Form – Additional Information). Many adults with learning disabilities will either be attending or associated with a learning disability agency. If the student is agreeable, contact can be made with the agency who should be encouraged to visit the scheme. This helps to form a relationship, access the necessary additional information and encourage joint responsibility between agency and scheme. A contact person at the agency should be nominated to facilitate good communication and mutual support.

5. In accordance with current practice, when the application form has been completed and if the literacy organiser thinks the student could benefit from classes, they should check if there is a place. If so, the student should be offered a place. If not, the studentís name should be put on the waiting list and they should be given a clear indication of when the place is likely to come up.

Guidelines for the inclusion of adults with learning disabilities into literacy schemes

6. The student's application form should already have indicated his/her reason for wanting to attend a literacy class. If a place is offered, they, in conjunction with agency staff or other help where appropriate, select one or more particular areas of interest. Examples would be how to tell the time, use a calculator, to write name and address. (See attached Menu of Practical Literacy and Numeracy Skills).

7. According to the selected areas of interest the literacy tutor, with support from agency staff where necessary, should complete the relevant assessment/check list with the student. (See attached checklists/worksheets). Once the studentís ability level in relation to that skill has been identified, a realistic goal should be agreed. To facilitate achievement and maximise motivation, goals should be small, specific and attainable. The student may wish to have more than one goal and could work on up to three goals at a time. This allows for variety in a class and can help concentration e.g. in a weekly one hour class, the student might spend 20 minutes on name and address, 20 minutes on 'o' clock' and 20 minutes on reading social signs.

8. Brief progress notes should be kept on a weekly basis in relation to the goal/s, noting progress in personal development, e.g. more confidence, better communication, quicker to find the room etc. In accordance with current practice, an annual review should take place to identify how much the student is benefiting from the classes. The benefit should then be weighed up against the demand for classes by other adults with learning disabilities and the resources available.

9. If more than three students with learning disabilities from the one agency join a literacy scheme, that agency should provide some specific support to the scheme in the form of relevant training to literacy tutors, teaching materials or resources.

10 An open communication line should be developed between the learning disability agency and the literacy scheme. The agency's staff member (contact person) should be contacted if any serious difficulty arises with the student and be available to support the student or tutor if necessary. If a situation is found to be unacceptable, even after discussion with the student, agency or family, the student may be asked to leave. The agency should support this request.

11. Responsibility for the student getting to and from the literacy scheme lies with the student, parent/guardian or agency, as appropriate. In the interest of safety the student or agency is required to notify the literacy scheme if they are unable to attend. Where there is no notification and the student does not arrive, the tutor should phone an agreed number to report this.

12. Every literacy scheme should aim to have their premises accessible to people with disabilities.

Appendices

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Application form – Additional Information

In addition to the current application form used in your scheme, some further information may be required in relation to people with special needs to ensure the best possible outcomes. Staff from the relevant learning disability agency or a family member may be helpful in providing this information with the student's agreement.

Workplace/Training Centre _____

Details of any previous literacy classes _____

Method of transport to and from the class _____

General health _____

Any specific obstacles to learning, i.e. dyslexia, perceptual problems? _____

_____

Contact name and telephone number of workplace / centre

_____

Contact name and telephone number of family member

_____

NAME

_____

DATE

_____

Mark each box with a tick if achieved, a zero if not achieved and an arrow if the skill is developing.

	1st assessment	2nd assessment
• Can hold pen correctly (i.e. tripod grip)		
• Can say the alphabet		
• Can recognise each letter		
• Can write the alphabet		
• Can write the alphabet in capital letters		
• Can write the alphabet in small letters		
• Can copy own name		
• Can write own name		
• Can copy own address		
[a] Can write own address		
• Spacing between letters is even		
• Spacing between words is even		
• Can write on a line		
• Knows when to use a capital letter		
• Has enough written vocabulary to write: - a simple card - a post card - a simple letter		
• Can sound out words and attempt to spell them		
• Can use a simple dictionary		
• Can use a standard dictionary		

Completed with

_____

Work Sheet for Handwriting Checklist

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

_____

_____

Write down the alphabet

_____

_____

Identify the following (which letter, capital or small)

Bb   **Ff**   **Gg**   **Nn**   **Pp**   **Rr**   **Tt**

_____

Wishing you
this kind of
gladness . . .
on your birthday
and always!

Post Card

_____

_____

_____

_____

Mark each box with a tick if achieved, a zero if not achieved and an arrow if the skill is developing.

NAME _____

DATE _____

	1st assessment	2nd assessment
• Can count up to 10		
• Can count 10 objects		
• Recognises numbers up to 10		
• Can copy numbers 1 – 10		
• Can write down numbers 1 – 10		
• Recognises numbers between 10 – 20		
• Can copy numbers between 10 – 20		
• Can write down numbers between 10 – 20		
• Recognises numbers over 20 (pick 6 at random)		
• Can copy numbers over 20 (pick 6 at random)		
• Can write numbers over 20 (pick 6 at random)		
• Understands the more and less		
• Can identify the coins 1p - £1		
• Can arrange the coins in order of value		
• Can identify the notes £5, £10, £20		
• Can arrange notes in order of value		
• Can add small numbers e.g. 4 + 3		
• Can add two digit numbers e.g. 24 + 37		
• Can add three digit numbers e.g. 165 + 273		
• Can subtract small numbers e.g. 7 - 4		
• Can subtract two digit numbers e.g. 36 - 14		
• Can subtract three digit numbers 237 - 149		
• Can use a calculator		

Completed with _____

Copy these numbers in the space below

1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

Write down the numbers 1 – 10 (cover the numbers above)

Copy these numbers in the space below

11   12   13   14   15   16   17   18   19   20

Write down the numbers 10 – 20 (cover the numbers above)

Identify and copy the following numbers

29   32   40   53   60   78

4	23	24	537
+3	+75	+37	+364
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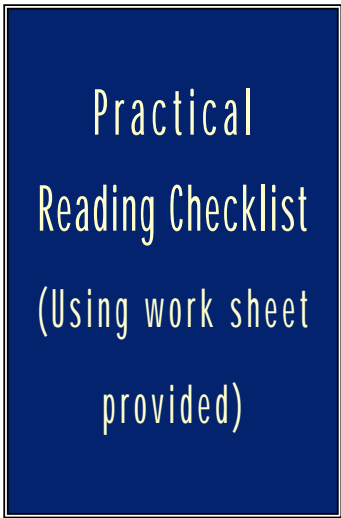| 7	86	45	364
-4	-33	-27	-145
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Also required –

An R.T.E. Guide, bus timetable and telephone directory

NAME _____

DATE _____

Mark each box with a tick if achieved, a zero if not achieved and an arrow if the skill is developing.

	1st assessment	2nd assessment
• Can say the alphabet		
• Can identify each letter		
• Knows the sound for each letter		
• Can read social signs e.g. exit, ladies, gents		
• Can match 3 pairs of 3-letter words if given 6 words		
• Can sound out 3-letter words		
• Can read 3-letter words		
• Can match 3 pairs of 4 – 6 letter words if given 6 words		
• Can sound out 4 – 6 letter words		
• Can read 4 – 6 letter words		
• Can read larger words		
• Can read newspaper headlines		
• Can read television programmes listed		
• Can read magazine large print		
• Can read magazine small print		
• Can read simple instruction e.g. how to make soup		
• Can understand what he / she is reading		
• Can read job advertisements		
• Can read timetables (bus/train)		
• Can use a telephone directory		
• Can read hand-written notes/letters		
• Can read a basic large print book		
• Can read for pleasure		

Completed with

_____

Alphabet

a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	i
j	k	l	m	n	o	p	q	r
s	t	u	v	w	x	y	z	

Social Signs

EXIT	PUSH	PULL	GENTS
LADIES	NO ENTRY	STOP	DANGER

3 Letter Words

pen   dog   tin   day   yes   bag

4 – 6 Letter Words

book   radio   garden   house   from   travel

Other Words

• family   shopping   Ireland   television

   going   return   complete   satisfaction

Sample Job Advertisement

1st assessment	2nd assessment

- Read a range of basic social sight words
- Read a range of advanced social sight words
- Read newspaper headlines
- Follow T.V. page of newspaper
- Read a menu
- Follow the film guide in the newspaper
- Join a library
- Write own name and address
- Write a greeting card
- Write a simple letter
- Fill in a form
- Write a C.V.
- Tell the time (o'clock half past quarter to and past)
- Tell the time (5, 10, 20, and 25 to and past)
- Tell the time (digital 12 hour)
- Tell the time (digital 24 hour)
- Follow a bus timetable
- Recognise coins and notes
- Add up simple sums of money
- Work out change – basic
- Work out change – advanced
- Use a calculator

Annual Review – Additional Information

In addition to the current annual review form used in your scheme, some further areas may be relevant to review in relation to people with special needs to ensure that progress in all related areas is acknowledged.

Ability to get to the class and find their way around. (Physical access)

_____

How student presents him/herself

_____

Level of interest and motivation to improve

_____

Ability to communicate

_____

Integration with other students

_____

Level of self-confidence

_____

Ability to set realistic goals

_____

Signed:

Tutor_____   Student_____