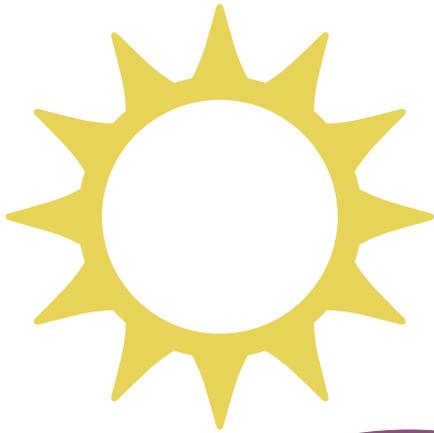
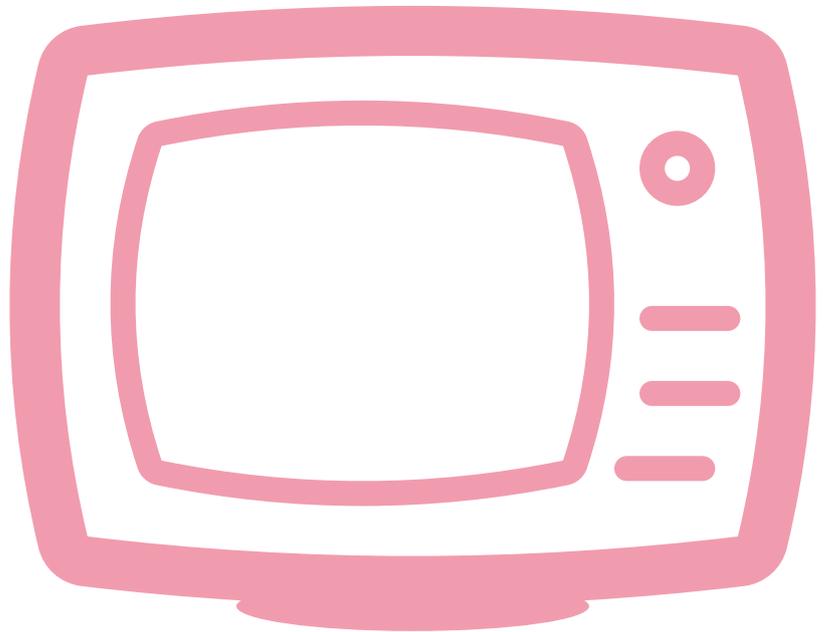
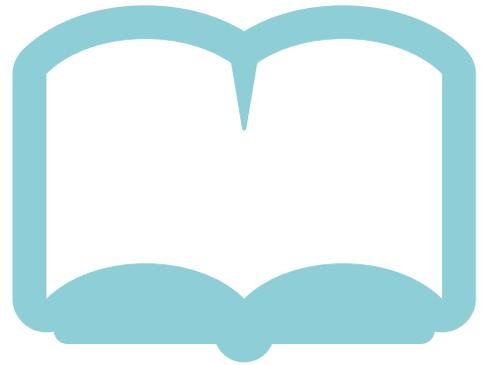


Literacy Matters

Keeping you up to date with literacy news in Ireland and informing you of the work NALA is doing



New TV Series



Adult literacy and numeracy in action:

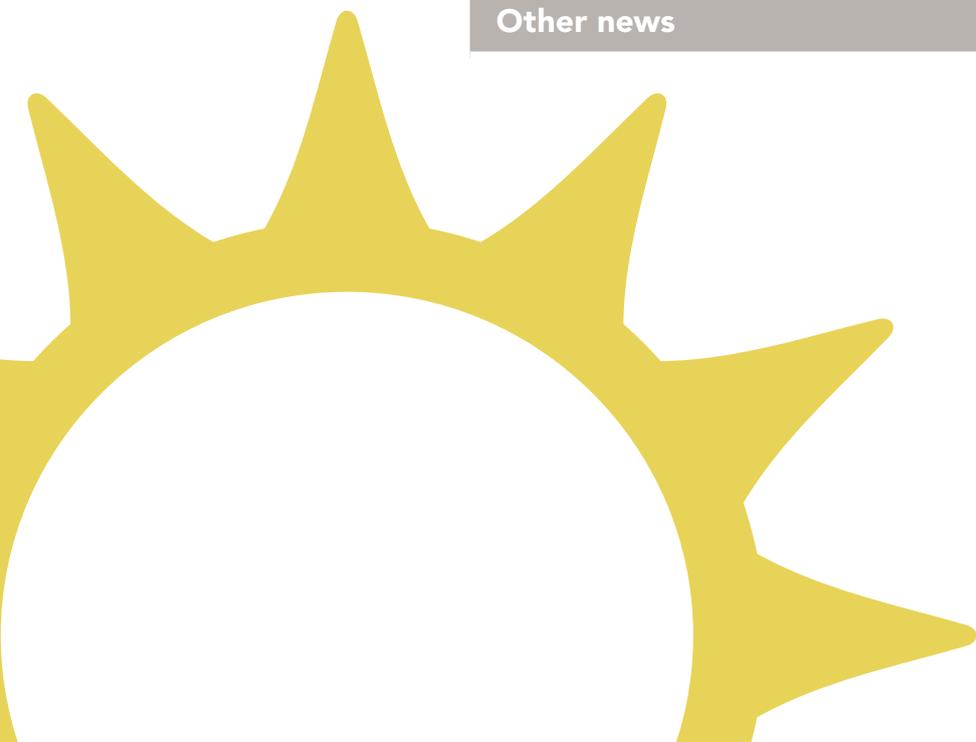
NALA has published a new research report that details some great teaching practices in six adult literacy services in Ireland.

Also:

- » New course for unemployed young people up and running
- » We are looking for your help to achieve changes to the Further Education and Training Bill
- » New Better World Books fund available

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Welcome

Welcome to our latest edition of Literacy Matters. We hope you like the new A4 style of our magazine. We made the decision to reduce the size so that it is cheaper to post to you and hopefully easier to handle and read.

In this edition you can hear all about our new TV series that follows six very busy Irish families as they take a journey to integrate learning into everyday life. It features some well known faces - Johnny Murtagh, Tony Griffin and Mary O'Rourke to name but a few. They wanted to get involved because of their own experiences with education and act as mentors to the families throughout the series.

On page six there's an interview with Tony Moloney, NALA's newest student sub-committee member. Like many people with literacy difficulties Tony left school early and hid his difficulties for years. However, since returning to education in Youghal he has never looked back and is loving his new role, representing students nationally.

Tutors may also be interested in reading about new research we did with the Waterford Institute of Technology, on page eight. The research presents six case studies on current teaching practices in adult literacy and numeracy provision in Ireland. Our aim is to describe and share great teaching techniques going on around the country so that they can be used by other adult literacy and numeracy tutors in Ireland.

As you can see, despite the new size, there's still as much content as ever in Literacy Matters and we hope you enjoy reading these and our other articles.

If you have any news that you would like us to include in our next edition, please email us at media@nala.ie

From all the team in NALA.

The Family Project

The Family Project is a new six-part TV series that follows some very busy, very typical families from around Ireland working together to overcome the learning and educational issues that affect their lives.

Each week, a different family sets out to tackle a problem that has a particular impact on them, whether it's Dad having trouble reading, the kids finding maths difficult, or simply the parents not finding time to help with homework. They work together as a team, to find a way to overcome the problem, bringing them closer as a family.

Each family is guided by the input and teaching of Ireland's best education experts. These experts devise a learning programme and give the families the techniques and tools to address their issue. They show ways that they can all work together, and will set a target or goal that the family can realistically achieve. The experts are from the same area as the family, to show that local resources are available to everyone in Ireland.

In addition to this guidance, each family will be mentored along the way by well-known figures from Irish life – Johnny Murtagh, Sheila O'Flanagan, Mary O'Rourke to name a few. These people were motivated to get involved because of their own experiences with education and can empathise with the families dealing with these issues.

For example, one series follows Wes Doyle and Linda Farrell, parents of five children from Clondalkin. Wes left school early and would like to return to education. His passion in life is horses, so he and his family are supported by champion jockey Johnny Murtagh.

Johnny is one of the most successful flat race jockeys in Ireland. He left school early to attend RACE to train to be a jockey. His reading and writing skills are ok but sometimes he has trouble spelling. He is very open about the fact that he wished he stayed on in school. Like Wes, he is also a father of five and says he is unable to help his kids with their homework, which falls on his wife Orla.

There are a lot of similarities between Johnny and Wes. Like Wes, he left school early, he is passionate about horses and he is going back to education in the form of Horse Trainer College. He can relate to Wes' son Luke in that he was the class clown in school, he had potential but no interest and as a result he left school young. However, with the benefit of hindsight he can advise Luke that there are endless benefits to staying in school and making a go of it.

In the series, he visits Wes in his comfort zone (Clondalkin stables) and similarly invites the family to his own stables in the Curragh to inspire Wes and the family.

Since the Family Project began, Wes says his confidence has improved and he is more determined than ever to go back to education so that he can work with horses on a professional basis. He has recently signed up to the L.I.F.E. Centre in Lucan to





The experts devise a learning programme and give the families the techniques and tools to address their issue.

start this process and hopes to complete a FETAC Course in Stable Management that includes Business Studies. Ultimately, Wes would like to become a Horse Dentist – he knows this means starting from scratch, studying biology but he says he got a good Inter Cert and he's determined to do it.

Johnny has also been learning from Wes and is very impressed with his knowledge of horses and the work that he does with stray and abandoned animals in the area. He has promised to become Patron of the new Pony Club they are trying to set up in the area.

The Family Project showcases the educational tools and techniques that are available to all families. Not only does it show how families can work together

improving collective learning, but also how they can apply these methods to activities that involve the whole gang. With the passion and involvement of some of Ireland's most respected personalities, the series will both inspire and inform families on how easy it is to enrich their lives by learning together.

So tune in every Monday night on RTÉ One at 7.30pm from 20 May!

“Going back to education has inspired and empowered me,”

Interview with Tony Moloney, NALA’s newest Student Sub-committee member

Like many people with literacy difficulties, Tony Moloney thought he was the only one. “I thought I was alone and that it was a shameful thing. If I ever had to deal with anything official, it hung over me like a huge fear in case I’d be asked to read,” he says.

However, since attending adult education classes everything has changed. “Going back to education has inspired and empowered me,” says Tony. “I can’t praise the tutors in Youghal enough, they’ve given me the confidence to try anything. And now I’m even representing other learners on the NALA Student Sub-committee,” says Tony proudly.

Tony Moloney was born and reared in Blackpool in the north-side of Cork. He was the youngest of six siblings and was only seven years old when his father died in the 1960s. Because his mother had multiple sclerosis, his eldest sister Rita gave up her job to look after and raise the family, while his brother Donal took on his father’s role of bringing in the money and making sure everyone towed the line.

“Donal passed away on 31st of January 2013 and I’ve been reflecting on how much he gave up and did for us. He was only 16 when our father died and he was a tremendous support to the family, working first at Murphy’s brewery, the stout makers in Cork and then in ESB, making sure we had everything we needed. He was a great brother,” says Tony.

Like many of his generation, Tony got left behind in Primary school as there were 57 children in his class. Despite this, things improved when he entered Secondary

school, where there were smaller classes. “It was only then that I started learning,” says Tony. “I remember there was one teacher, Mr Twomey, a very tall, thin man from the Gaeltacht. He took an interest in me and was the highlight of my schooling. While I was weak at reading and writing, he knew I was good at maths and science and gave me great encouragement,” he says.

Indeed Tony excelled in these subjects and got an A+ in both Maths and Science in the Inter Cert.

After completing these exams, Tony left school in 1973 and got an apprenticeship as a painter and decorator. He had originally applied for a job with Pfizer in Cork and he even made it to the second interview but lost out because of his literacy difficulties.

Since then he has worked continuously in a number of different jobs but he admits that his problems with reading and writing have always haunted him.

“When I worked as a taxi driver in Cork I was expected to jot down addresses and directions from the radio. That wasn’t an option for me so I bought a Dictaphone to get around this – recording the message the minute it came in and playing it back to myself. If I couldn’t read signs, I’d ask someone. Before long I’d memorised all our customers and addresses,” he says.

Tony also worked in the pub business for a while but always found the paperwork difficult. “I was nearly teaching myself to read at that stage – comparing the labels on bottles with the names in order forms,” he says. But dealing with solicitors and banks or anything official was always nerve wrecking.

"You think you're the only one who has a problem reading or writing, so you have this constant fear that you'll be caught out," he says.

It was only recently that Tony decided to return to education and tackled his literacy difficulties. "I signed up for a computer course in Youghal Adult Learning Centre - basically I was entitled to six hours free tuition in the evenings as part of a FÁS job I was doing locally. That was really the start for me. The tutor noticed that I had difficulty reading and spelling so with her support I decided to do one-to-one literacy classes," he says.

"At first I was terrified as I thought I was the only one with problems or that I was the worst. But they're amazing in the Youghal Centre - they have this ability to put you instantly at ease, everyone is treated as an equal, there's no them and us," he says.

After a year and a half working with his tutor, Tony joined a group class with ten other adults. "It's fantastic, we've been together two years and are now all on FETAC Level 3 at the moment - everyone has similar stories and is helping each other out - it's great fun," says Tony, who has special praise for his tutor Cathy O'Mahoney. "It's unbelievable what she does every day. She's always online getting us new resources to work on and training herself so she can help us even more. She knows how I have difficulty seeing words on a page and has given me different aids to help me with reading," he says.

Tony was voted class representative by his classmates. There are four from each area in Cork - Cobh, Fermoy, Midleton and Youghal, who represent their colleagues views and organise student development days and attend networking events. It was while attending last year's Student Day in Waterford that Tony was invited to join the NALA Student Sub-committee.

"Students are the voice of NALA and we represent students at grassroots level. Recently we got a learner representative on the new Education and Training Boards



so that's a real achievement for us - giving students local representation. I can't wait to get even more involved," says Tony.

"Three years ago I was one of six guys working with FÁS who was offered six hours free tuition and it's given me a new lease of life. It's a great opportunity that makes a huge difference and I would hate to see that opportunity lost to others with cutbacks in education and training. That's something that I will be working for," says Tony.

Tony is married to Deirdre and has three sons aged 17, 24 and 28. We wish him continued success in his education and new role on the NALA Student Sub-committee.

If you would like to speak to Tony you can contact him at tonymoloney100@gmail.com

Adult literacy and numeracy in action

New research captures innovative teaching and learning practice in Ireland

With so much innovative work being done in adult literacy tuition, NALA has just published a new research report that details some great teaching practices in Ireland. We learn from each other in all aspects of our life and the purpose of this report is no different – to describe and share different teaching techniques so that it can be used as a resource by other adult literacy and numeracy tutors in Ireland.

In the report six adult literacy services were selected based on their use of Guidelines for Good Adult Literacy Work, involvement in the NALA/ WIT programmes and for their geographical location.

For example, one case study demonstrates good adult literacy practice through ensuring a learner centred approach. The ‘Learning to Learn Strategy’ was developed by the Adult Basic Education Service of Meath VEC and the tutor on this programme is Barbara Smith.

Adult literacy tutors will be familiar with the ‘learning to learn’ performance indicators used in the National Qualifications Framework and FETAC qualifications. But how do learners achieve these desired outcomes?

A specific ‘Learning to Learn Strategy’ was developed in Co. Meath for new groups that are starting out on their further education career in adult basic education. It was based on the Dyslexia Strategies developed by Ron Davis (see www.dyslexia.com). The key is to avoid the onset of symptoms that stop our ability to learn.

The Adult Literacy Organiser, Bernie McKeivitt, observed that many adult learners display characteristics that are associated with dyslexia such as loss of concentration and disorientation. During disorientation, all of the senses except taste are altered. Perceptions of time and task change. These distortions affect our ability to engage with a task correctly, and hear or read instructions accurately.

This observation resulted in the decision to make adult literacy tutors aware that adult learners can acquire and practice some simple techniques that help them recover their concentration so that they can remember effectively.

The ‘Learning to Learn Strategy’ is the structure through which tutors can introduce and practice simple techniques that enables learners to become aware of when their focus is lost and needs to be brought back. Once a learner is aware that focus has been lost, it is an easy matter to decide to bring it back again.

One of the first steps is that the tutor explains the strategy to the group. This involves taking them through a brief exercise, asking them to visualise a familiar scenario such as going home and making a cup of tea. This illustrates the point that the mind can wander while the body is physically present, and that there are two parts to learning – the physical presence in the room, but also the mental attention, or focus.

‘Focus, Release and Dial’ is the second component that is explained.

Preparing to focus involves bringing the attention to the task, being aware of any tension and taking a big breath to release it and relax, then consciously identifying the

ideal point for learning on a real or imaginary 'Energy Dial' and visualise turning the dial to the required point. The learner identifies the ideal number between one and ten that facilitates their learning, with one a state of extreme relaxation, and ten a state of being highly energised. The learner identifies the ideal number, checks this against their current state, and imagines dialling from the current number to the ideal. Focus is then brought to the task. The learner is primed for learning.

There are many other aspects to the 'Learning to Learn Strategy', for example:

- The tutor requests permission from each learner to raise awareness when they appear to lose focus and suggest the strategy, and gives the learner time to attend to this. Telling a learner to use it is never appropriate.
- Tutors recommend the avoidance of doubt because when the learner doubts, the focus can be lost.
- Tutors are reminded that adults have different triggers and that tutors need to watch out for them. This is not the first time round for adult learners – many have had poor experiences within the education system during their school years. Someone may have said in the past "come on you, wake up, focus". Triggers can also be the tone of voice or the use of a particular expression. Tutors can remind learners that the situation may be similar to previous ones, but the difference is that the learner is now in control.

The effects of the Learning to Learn strategy

Learners describe that being able to shift the Energy Dial down calms them, stops panic taking over and allows them to proceed with the task. Learners understand the difference between being physically in a room but mentally leaving the room. Once they are aware of this, it is only a matter of

Adult Literacy and Numeracy in Action: six case studies of practice work in Ireland



Waterford Institute of Technology
INSTITIÚD TEICHNOLAÍOCHTA PHORT LÁIRGE



conscious choice to bring the focus to the task. We all lose focus, and all learners need to know is that they can get it back.

Tutor Barbara Smith reports that it is an attractive and effective approach because it caters to each individual. When used in an integrated literacy programme, deep transformation in learners is evident, the kind that opens up new possibilities for them.

"We see them flower," says Barbara, "which is always an indication that something good is allowing that to happen".

To read more about this and the remaining innovative five case studies you can download the report **Adult Literacy and Numeracy in Action** (pictured above) for free at www.nala.ie/resources/adult-literacy-and-numeracy-action-six-case-studies-practice-work-ireland

Do you read the small print?

I bet many of you answered 'No' to this question. The small print contains important information that is often not highlighted in the main document. By not reading the small print, you risk:

- being ill-informed about the terms of an offer;
- sometimes thinking you are covered by insurance when you are not;
- not understanding the full costs of products, particularly financial products; and
- taking medication incorrectly.

NALA has campaigned for years for the use of plain English in documents aimed at the public. One of our internationally approved Plain English guidelines is the guideline around the use of clear and legible font. A legible font is one that you can see and that is accessible and easy to read for most people. This document, for example, is written in Avenir (point size 12 and it is a sans serif).

In 2008, we were heartened that Dublin's Q102 radio station launched a campaign called 'Make small Print BIG Print'. They started the campaign in response to callers complaining about how difficult it was to read small print, particularly in terms and conditions on contracts. Scott Williams, CEO of Q102, and others gave a presentation on the campaign to the Joint Committee on Enterprise, Trade and Employment.

The Department of Jobs, Innovation and Enterprise is now running a public consultation on the use of small print in

consumer contracts. Their consultation paper made significant mention of our work in plain English and our guidelines on legible font. You can read our response to the consultation questions in the May 2013 news section of www.simplyput.ie

The financial sector also have an increased interest in the use of clear and intelligible font. Irish Life found that 7 out of 10 of us don't read the small print because it is hard to read and uses too much jargon. The Central Bank of Ireland's Revised Consumer Protection Code (2012) now states that firms and business they regulate **must not** hide information about a product or service in the small print of an advertisement.

It makes sense to use regular sized font as small print is notoriously harder to read, particularly if you have poor eyesight and or a literacy difficulty.

So, the next time you enter a competition or are about to sign a consent form or terms or conditions, read the small print!



NALA continues to lead in health literacy work

NALA published its first report on health literacy almost ten years ago. Since then it has been the main driver in this area, through its efforts to make health literacy a priority for public policy.

The most important Irish health policy paper to impact on health literacy to date was the Health Promotion Strategy 2000-2005. This Strategy acknowledged that 'poor literacy skills...limits access to health information and health services'. It was the driving force behind a Department of Health national training programme with up to 300 health promotion practitioners taking part in literacy awareness and Plain English training.

National Health Literacy Advisory Panel

A more recent development and a new phase in the development of NALA's work in this area was the establishment of the National Health Literacy Advisory Panel. This was originally established to guide the European Health Literacy Study HLS- EU.

This study represents the first attempt to measure health literacy in Europe including Ireland. The results were launched in December 2011 and are available on www.healthliteracy.ie. It found that 4 in 10 Irish people have limited health literacy; this highlights the need for national policy and resources to tackle this problem.

In order to continue and strengthen the efforts to promote health literacy policy and practice, the members of the Panel decided to continue to meet and work together.

NALA agreed to act as secretariat to the Panel and the first meeting took place in September 2012. A core of members have committed to work together including

representatives from statutory, non-governmental and academic organisations. These include the HSE, Department of Health, UCD, UCC, ICS, IHF and Temple Street Hospital.

The National Health Literacy Advisory Panel aim to:

- publicise the Irish findings of the European survey;
- develop strategies to implement health literacy in relevant political and social contexts; and
- make recommendations for action such as publicity campaigns.

It now meets on a quarterly basis and carries out joint work. It has made a number of joint submissions including to the new Population Health Strategy and the National Consent Policy. It also supported the finalisation of the executive summary of the EU Health Literacy Survey. This was completed by Dr. Gerardine Doyle, Dr Kenneth Cafferkey and Mr James Fullam. <http://www.healthliteracy.ie/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/Executive-Summary.pdf>.

It acts as a rich source of information between members and also helps identify opportunities for individual and joint work. The Panel will draw up an action plan for the coming year at its next meeting. A key focus of this work will be the implementation of 'Healthy Ireland - a Framework for Improved Health and Wellbeing', which was launched on 28 March 2013. The members of the Panel hope that the new strategy prioritises health literacy as a key factor in promoting inclusive access to health care services.





New course for unemployed young people up and running

We have filled our recruitment target of 66 to our new programme with Southside Partnership for unemployed 18 – 25 year olds in the Dun Laoghaire – Rathdown area. You may remember that it was launched by An Tánaiste Eamon Gilmore, TD in February. Its aim is to help young adults get a FETAC qualification and support them find a job by providing them with a personal Job Coach.

“It’s great because there are no exams on this course. Each participant chooses the subjects and the times that they learn. They get their qualification by doing the course-work online, at their own pace. Also, there are lots of subjects to choose from, for example, Digital Media, Internet Skills, Health and Safety Awareness, Communications, Personal and Interpersonal Skills,” said Inez Bailey, NALA Director.

The programme (course and work placement) lasts for nine months. During this time participants do the qualifications on a computer with help from a tutor. Depending

on how they get on, they may finish it sooner. If participants feel that their reading, writing or maths skills are holding them back, NALA can help with that too and over the 9 months they work towards a full FETAC Level 3 Award, which is Junior Cert level.

“We are delighted to be able to support under 25 year olds who are unemployed in this area,” said Marie Carroll, Chief Executive Officer, Southside Partnership. Participants on this programme get a personal Job Coach, who will help with CVs and interview skills, a work placement and support to find a more permanent job or move onto further education or training,” she said.

One of the participants Declan Daly is coming into Monkstown Local Employment Services twice a week to work on www.writeon.ie. He decided to begin by brushing up on his Maths but aims to complete as many FETAC Level 3 modules as he can during the nine months. He says that the course is grand and that he is really looking forward to working with the Jobs Coach, Paul Downer to get a job as soon as he can.

1. Michael Kelly, Ballybrack, Daniel Doyle, Shankill and Noel Byrne, Shankill at the launch.
2. Marie Carrol, Southside Partnership, An Tánaiste Eamon Gilmore, Fiona Burke, Local Employment Services, Inez Bailey, NALA.
3. Declan Daly hard at work on www.writeon.ie in Monkstown LES.
4. Brendan Walker, Bray DSP with Paul Downer, LES Jobs Coach at an open day for participants on 26 February.



During the programme, participants will also meet other young people who are doing the same course. They will meet in small groups and learn new skills together like writing great CVs, interview and presentation skills. Paul Downer, the jobs coach based in Monkstown Local Employment Services has been meeting the young people and is delighted to be able to support them in their job search.

“One of the participants has already got a placement with a local security firm and I am currently working with him to apply for his security licence, while NALA helps him brush up the skills he needs,” says Paul.

Each participant’s aim is to become more job ready and secure employment or to plan a longer term career path and take up an educational opportunity that leads them closer to their goals.

We congratulate everyone involved and wish all the participants continued success in the programme.

“The level of unemployment among young people in this country is far too high. That is why the priority for this Government is jobs and getting people into employment. I congratulate NALA and the Southside Partnership for running with the Momentum Programme which is one of a number of initiatives the Government has put in place to get men and women back into employment by responding to the needs of both job-seekers and prospective employers”, said An Tánaiste, Eamon Gilmore.

Keeping an eye on reform of further education and training

A major reform of further education and training (FET) is currently taking place in Ireland. There are two significant pieces of legislation going through our parliament that will shape that reform.

One is the Education and Training Boards (ETBs) Bill. This will amalgamate the 33 VECs with FÁS training centres into 16 Education and Training Boards (ETBs).

The second is the creation of a national authority for further education and training called SOLAS. SOLAS will coordinate and fund further education and training, and implement policy decided by the Departments of Education and Skills and of Social Protection. The SOLAS Bill also disbands FÁS.

The Education and Training Boards Bill 2013

When the draft legislation to establish the 16 Education and Training Boards was first published, there was no adult learner voice included at Board level. NALA campaigned to change this and secure an adult learner on each ETB. While there was general support for the change, when the Bill was introduced to the Houses of Oireachtas, adult learners were still not included on the Boards.

We then met with the spokespersons of political parties. Olive Phelan, from the NALA Student Development Committee, presented the NALA case to the Houses of Oireachtas Joint Committee on Education and Social Protection.

Building on the cross party support, the vice chairperson of the Committee, Aodhan O'Riordan tabled an amendment. This was accepted by the Minister and is now part of the legislation. The Bill is going through the final stages and should allow for groups like NALA and AONTAS to nominate adult learners who will be selected on to each ETB.

The Further Education and Training (SOLAS) Bill 2013

The SOLAS Bill sets out the structures and remit of the new education and training authority. NALA believe the Bill is too narrow and should be more inclusive of people who engage in FET for a broad range of reasons, for example to develop their literacy and numeracy or to support engagement in social and community activities.

NALA is currently campaigning for change in three areas.

- SOLAS should be explicitly required to raise adult literacy and numeracy levels by maintaining a national adult literacy and numeracy strategy.
- The Bill should be amended to include consultation with adult learners, particularly with regard to development of an FET strategy.
- The composition of the Board of SOLAS would be greatly enhanced by including an adult learner perspective.

NALA is cooperating with AONTAS in a national campaign to achieve these three changes as well as continuing in our own right to lobby politicians and decision makers in further education and training. As a result, a series of appropriate amendments have been proposed by Labour (Aodhan O'Riordan), Fianna Fail (Charlie McConalogue) and Sinn Fein (Johnathan O'Brien).

Can you help us inform more politicians by sending a letter to your local TD or Senator? You will find a sample letter with this edition of Literacy Matters.

Big attendance at the Adult Literacy Organisers' Forum in Galway



John Stewart, NALA with Minister Ciarán Cannon at the ALO Forum

At this year's Adult Literacy Organisers' (ALO) Forum in Galway, there was plenty of interesting discussions about the changing landscape of education in Ireland. This included the ongoing debate about the creation of the Education and Training Boards, the end of FÁS and the establishment of SOLAS.

Tomás MacPháidín, CEO, City of Galway VEC spoke of the need to agree a definition and strategy for Further Education. Traditionally there has been a tendency to think of it as separated activities with separate funding streams and little cross-over. However this will change and there is an opportunity for it to be developed more like the literacy service - student focussed to suit the end user. Therefore ALOs are best placed, through their experience, to help shape how Further Education develops.

Jay Derrick from the Institute of Education, University of London spoke about professional judgement and standards in assessment. He has worked in the area of adult literacy since 1975 in the UK and is now director of teacher training at the University of London. In his presentation he emphasised how each learner is unique and how we should resist talking about education as if it is a mass production line. Standardisation tends to produce the minimum level of acceptable quality.

He promotes a more holistic approach that allows for the distinctiveness of every situation. Teachers know the needs of students and rely on their judgement and experience to take account of situations –

trust and respect is the foundation of this process. Therefore the most important training a teacher can get is while they are at work – for example helping them examine how they could improve their professional judgement. In the Institute of Education in London they achieve this by involving teachers more in research projects that explore these issues.

Ciarán Cannon, Minister for Training and Skills talked about the central role that ALOs have in coordinating and managing the adult literacy service which now serves 57,000 people. He highlighted the importance of initial assessment to ensure the learner is placed at the right level appropriate to their needs at that time.

He also acknowledged that the major refocus of SOLAS will be challenging for staff so it was vital that we continued to work together, making sure we have up to date and relevant data to ensure that appropriate decisions are made.

A full report from the Forum will be available on www.nala.ie in the coming months – see our e-zine for updates.

The ALO Forum took place on the 18 and 19 April in Galway. It was jointly managed and organised by the ALOA and NALA. This year's theme was 'Initial Assessment' and it is hoped that the material generated at the Forum will provide the basis for recommendations from the ALOA to the Department of Education and Skills.

Help My Kid Learn goes from strength to strength

If you read our last Literacy Matters, you will know that we launched www.helpmykidlearn.ie in September. The purpose of the website is to provide fun activities that parents can do with their children to improve their reading, writing and maths skills. It highlights the way children learn as part of their everyday lives and especially the positive things that children learn at home from their families.



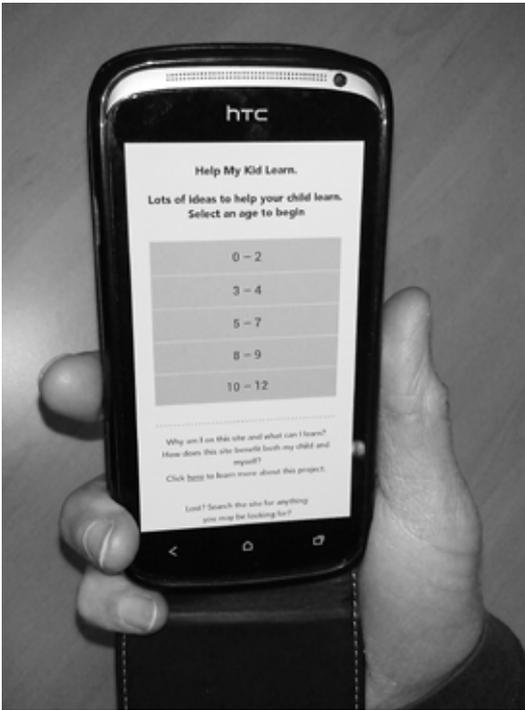
Here's a recap on some of its key features:

- Once you log onto www.helpmykidlearn.ie you have the option to watch a video. This video tells you about the website, how children learn as part of their everyday lives and how you can help them learn more.
- Information on the website is organised in two ways:

- Firstly, there are five main age groups. They are **0-2 years, 3-4 years, 5-7 years, 8-9 years and 10-12 years**
- Secondly, each age group is organised into five main competencies or areas of learning. They are **Talking, Playing, Reading, Writing and Counting**. Each area has a different colour.
- In each age group there are over 25 suggestions of fun activities that will help your child practice these different areas of learning.
- As well as these fun activities, there are also top tips, a section on ages and stages and information on how you can build these activities into your day.
- Throughout the website the emphasis is on using time that you already have with your child rather than finding more time.

We keep updating the website with seasonal information at Halloween, Christmas, St. Patrick's Day, Easter and the Summer holidays so that people can get ideas from it throughout the year. Parents can also sign-up for handy tips that will be emailed to them once a month.





The website can also be viewed from a mobile smart phone – probably the cheapest and easiest way for most people to access the internet. Already we know that one in four visits to the website come from mobile phones.

Statistics on www.helpmykidlearn.ie

- There have been 47,000 visits to the website since it was first launched
- **35,000 unique visitors**
- The average time people spend on the website is four minutes

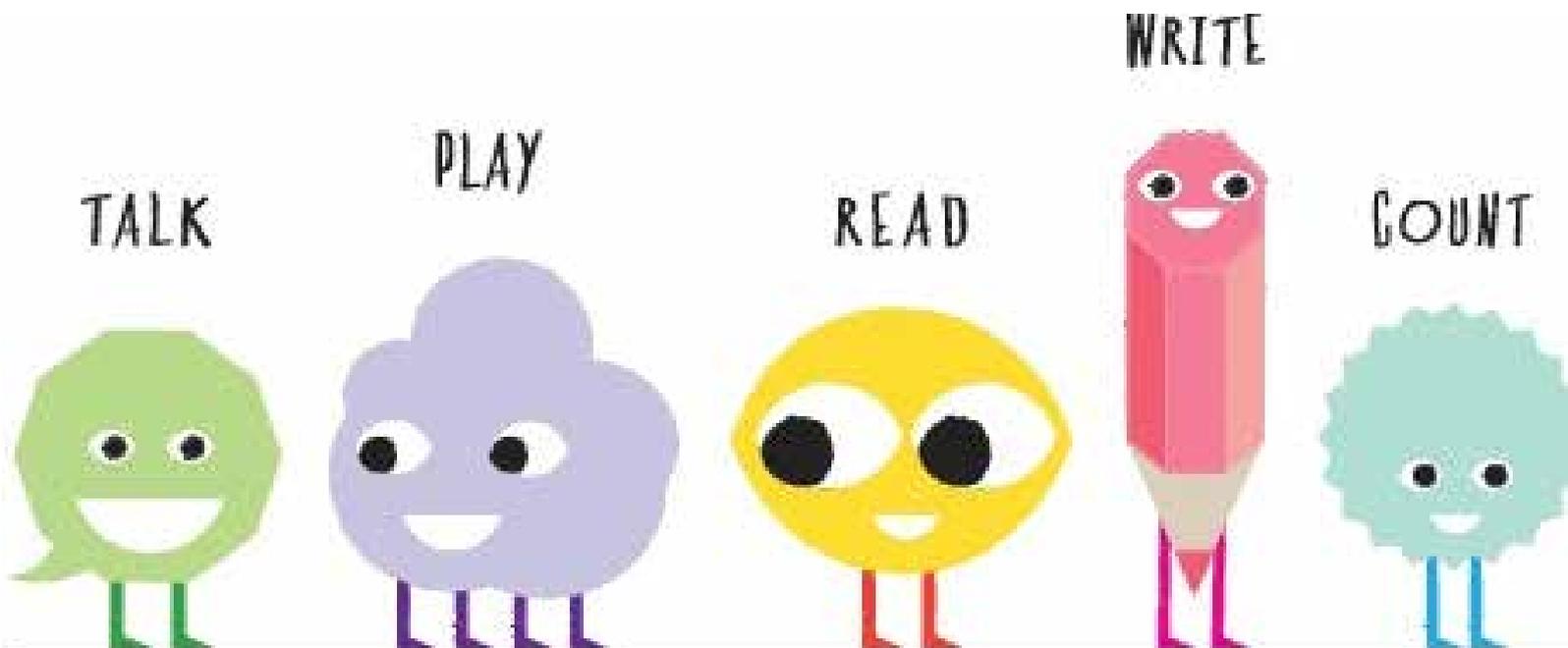
Can you help us promote Help My Kid Learn?

We developed the website as part of our commitment to the Department of Education and Skills 'National Strategy to Improve Literacy and Numeracy among Children and Young People 2011 — 2020'. We also consulted with over 40 stakeholders when developing the website, who are now helping us promote it to the general public. Can you help us too?

- Are there any community connections you have, where you could let people know about the website?
- Links from other websites are important for bringing people to www.helpmykidlearn.ie. Are there any website links you could make to the website?
- Can you recommend the website to parents and other professionals who work with parents and guardians?

If you need any promotional material, for example Help My Kid Learn posters, leaflets or bookmarks, please let us know and we can send them to you.

You can contact Margaret Murray on 01 4127928 or email mmurray@nala.ie in relation to any of the points above.



National Adult Literacy Awareness Week: 23 - 27 September 2013

Literacy for the 21st Century - preparing for PIAAC

On 8 October, the Central Statistics Office will release the Irish results of a landmark new OECD survey called PIAAC. PIAAC stands for the Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies. It tests the knowledge and skills of adults in 24 countries.

For PIAAC in Ireland, the Central Statistics Office has interviewed over 5,000 people aged 16-65 years old, assessing their literacy, numeracy and technology skills. The survey breaks new ground by collecting a broad range of information including how these skills are used at work and in other contexts such as the home and the community. Importantly, it will also expand the scope of the skills being measured, for example, it will measure people's numeracy skills and their ability to solve problems in our technology-rich environment. No previous assessments have been this broad.

With this momentous survey on its way, the theme for National Adult Literacy Awareness Week in September is '**Literacy for the 21st Century – preparing for PIAAC**'. Our objective is to help tutors, adult literacy organisers, policy makers and stakeholders to understand the survey in order to analyse and interpret the results appropriately.

Throughout the week we will organise a number of seminars that will include:

What does PIAAC mean for Ireland?

PIAAC has the potential to help us to assess the effectiveness of education and training systems. The aim of this seminar will be to help everyone identify more clearly how the results for Ireland could reflect on past policy decisions and impact on future policy direction.

Skills used at work

This seminar will explain and debate the Survey of Skills Used at Work, which forms part of PIAAC and assesses the relationships between the skills an individual possesses and their level of use at work.

Problem solving in a technology-rich environment

This seminar aims to explain the importance and relevance of PIAAC to people working in the technology sector. Unlike some traditional problem solving assessments, the emphasis of PIAAC is on information access, evaluation, retrieval and processing.

More information on National Adult Literacy Awareness Week will be included in NALA's upcoming Ezines.

Better World Books fund gives €1,600 to five literacy projects

We are delighted to announce that five of our members were successful in getting funding from Better World Books this January.

- North Wall Community Training Centre and Harold's Cross Adult Learning Group received €300 each for new books to stock a library for their students.
- Killarney Adult Literacy Centre was awarded €270 for resources for their innovative 'Learning through Geography and Gardening' programmes.
- Tralee Adult Literacy Centre received €200 to purchase novels for their women's reading circle.
- Kenmare Adult Education Centre was awarded €500 to fund resources for its family learning programme.

Better World Books sells used books online to raise money for leading literacy charities around the world. Their website is called <http://www.betterworldbooks.co.uk/>. A portion of the revenue goes to the organisation that contributed the book, and/or to one of the non-profit literacy partners.

It was only last year that NALA became Better World Books chosen charity partner in Ireland and so far, they have raised €3,000 which we have given to ten literacy projects in Ireland.

Do you have a project that would benefit from funding?

All you have to do is tell us what you would like to use the funding for and provide us with feedback on how it is making an impact – it's that simple. It can be used to fund new resources, training or any initiative that support adult or family literacy projects.

You must be a member of NALA to apply and the maximum amount available per application is €500.

Send an email now to media@nala.ie or call 01 4127909 for more details.

Closing date for this round of funding is 30 June 2013.



NALA – using the internet to deliver accreditation to literacy learners in Ireland

In 2008, NALA commissioned a Swiss-based company, Avallain to develop www.writeon.ie. The website is run as part of NALA's Distance Learning Service.

The website www.writeon.ie offers accreditation through a combination of online and distance learning supports at Levels 2 and 3 on the National Framework of Qualifications for Ireland. There are 12 minor awards at Level 2 and 14 minor awards available at Level 3. The site went live in September 2008. Its success might be judged by the following statistics:

- **Over 29,000 learning accounts have been set up.**
- **In 2012, over 14,000 different computers accessed the site.**
- **The average time spent on the site is over 22 minutes.**
- **Over 1,600 learners have received almost 13,000 nationally accredited certificates at Levels 2 and 3 on the Irish National Framework of Qualifications for Ireland; and**
- **Over 180 traditional face-to-face literacy centres, including 31 VECs, have introduced blended learning models of provision incorporating writeon.ie.**

To date, NALA has provided 13,000 Awards at levels 2 and 3 to thousands learners:

Round	FETAC Submission Date	Learners	L 2 Minor Awards	L2 Major Awards	L3 Minor Awards	L3 Major Awards
1	2008	11	11	75	0	0
2	2009	33	98	10	0	0
3	Feb-10	138	614	57	0	0
4	May-10	45	188	17	0	0
5	Jul-10	132	594	63	0	0
6	Jan-11	94	442	47	18	2
7	May-11	368	1,376	107	192	14
8	Jul-11	211	391	36	196	4
9	Sep-11	100	415	34	71	11
10	Dec-11	113	456	29	64	11
11	April-12	243	686	53	194	8
12	June-12	234	685	53	197	8
13	Oct-12	601	2,027	181	571	43
14	Apr-13	626	2,307	222	234	21
Totals			10,290	984	1,737	122

There is no other organisation in the world currently offering free accreditation in this way at this level.

The National Poisons Information Centre wins at National Health Literacy Awards

The National Poisons Information Centre at Beaumont Hospital was amongst the winners at the **Crystal Clear MSD Health Literacy Awards** for their project, 'Say NO To Poisons!'. At a ceremony in Dublin on Monday 13 May, the team was rewarded for their project which they developed when in 2011 they received over 9,000 enquiries relating to human cases of poisoning and 46.6% of these cases were children under 5 years of age.

The National Poisons Information Centre won first place in the category 'Best Health Promotion Project' for developing 'Say NO To Poisons!', an unique and innovative campaign which focused on delivering age-appropriate safety information to pre-school children. The aim of the campaign was to raise poison awareness and increase understanding in children by teaching them to always ask an adult if something is safe to eat, drink or touch.

"The 'Say NO To Poisons!' project showed a clear understanding of the importance of using clear communications to deliver important health information. They used age-appropriate communication tools and a simple, effective catchphrase to communicate their message in this innovative and quantifiable campaign," said Dr Gerardine Doyle, UCD School of Business and chairperson of the Crystal Clear Awards judging panel. "The project proved very effective in empowering pre-school children to ask questions about the safety of everyday items they encountered. Six months after the launch, over 3,600 "Say NO to Poisons!" books were ordered for childcare facilities and 238 books

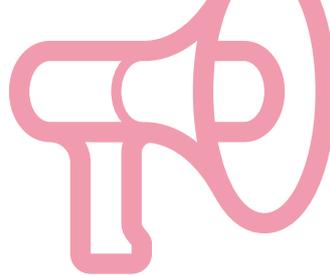
downloaded. There was also an increase in enquiries from the general public (24%) to the National Poisons Information Centre".

Four other organisations were also recognised for their efforts to communicate health information more clearly to the public:

- Winner of Best Project in General Practice - The School of Medicine, UCC for 'CLAS – Mobile Application';
- Winner of Best Project in a Hospital - The Radiation Oncology Department, CUH for 'Understanding Radiation Therapy & the Patient Pathway';
- Winner of Best Project in a Community or in a Social Setting -The Alzheimer Society of Ireland for their booklet 'Know Your Rights' and Deirdre Veldon & Nuala Storey; and
- The Irish Times won an award for Best Health Communication through Journalism for 'The Mental Health Issue'.

The five winning initiatives were selected from nearly 130 entries which had to demonstrate how they addressed the issue of health literacy. Health literacy is a person's ability to understand and use basic health information, whether they receive it in writing, in person or over the phone. Health literacy also involves a person having the knowledge to understand their options and make informed decisions about their own health.

Other news



Kylemore Community Training Centre team try out a 'Drop and Read' initiative

Kylemore Community Training Centre team and their learners recently tried out a Department of Education and Skills 'Drop and Read' initiative to encourage everyone to pick up a book or magazine and read it.

Classes stopped for 30 minutes and everyone in the centre dropped what they were doing and read. No access to computers for on-line reading was allowed as the team felt it should be about actually holding something to read. The General Manager sneaked around the centre to see how it was going and one class had even lit a candle – the Instructor and learners were so engrossed they did not even see her come in. "You could hear a pin drop" she said. Feedback from both staff and learners has been fantastic and everyone resumed classes with a relaxed and calm demeanour. It is planned to continue the initiative on a fortnightly basis and maybe even extend the time if it continues to have the added benefits it has so far.

Adult literacy student gets his letter read on the Ray D'Arcy Show

Congratulations to Dermot O'Brien from Drogheda who last December wrote a letter to the Ray D'Arcy show about his very positive experience of returning to

education to improve his literacy. In his letter he explained how he had always struggled with writing but since attending Louth VEC Adult Education Centre he has never looked back. The show received a great response and the podcast is one of the most popular for 2012. Dermot, who is 36 years old and a father of two young children, was keen to tell his story so as to encourage other people who have literacy difficulties to call their local VEC Adult Education Centre to get help. As a lorry driver he also makes great use of technology to help him learn, having downloaded an app on his phone to check his spelling and listening to audio books on a regular basis when he is driving.

Now recruiting Learner Ambassadors

A Learner Ambassador is a student who shares their story about the benefits of returning to education with people in their community and motivates others to take up a learning opportunity.

As part of a new EU funded Department of Education initiative, we are now recruiting Learner Ambassadors from the VEC sector in Ireland. Each Learner Ambassador will be trained to work in teams to promote education within groups, associations or networks they are involved in and at other events.

50 popular iPad Apps for struggling readers

Whether you're working one-to-one or in a group, you're undoubtedly always looking for new tools to help students meet their potential. While there are numerous technologies out there that can help, perhaps one of the richest is the iPad, which offers dozens of applications designed to meet the needs of literacy students. Here, www.teachthought.com/ a website dedicated to learning, highlights just a few of the amazing apps out there that can help students improve their skills in reading, writing, and spelling. Here's the full link <http://www.teachthought.com/apps-2/50-popular-ipad-apps-for-struggling-readers-writers/>



It will require some very hard work and a commitment by each Learner Ambassador to make at least two presentations but we believe it will be well worth it. We will also facilitate the Learner Ambassadors to complete FETAC LEVEL 3 Modules in Self Advocacy and Event Management.

The goal of this campaign is to encourage people in local communities, through word of mouth and testimonials, to engage in adult education.

If you think you or a student you know would be interested in becoming a Learner Ambassador email dmcbride@nala.ie for more information.

Boyzone singer Shane Lynch does documentary about dyslexia



As part of a Channel 5 documentary in January called My Secret Past, Shane Lynch revealed that when he left school at the age of 15 he couldn't read or write. The Boyzone singer admitted that his teachers thought he was a bad student and didn't realise he had a problem. The singer was tested for dyslexia as part of the programme and discovered that he is dyslexic, "The diagnosis makes my past more acceptable. I wasn't lazy, I had a genuine problem," he says. Thanks to the help of expert tutors, Shane is now able to read to his two daughters Billie Rae, four and four-month-old Marley Mae. We congratulate Shane for sharing his story on TV.

NALA complies with new Governance Code

The Governance Code is a code of practice for good governance of community, voluntary and charitable organisations in Ireland. Good governance means that policies and procedures are in place to ensure that an organisation is well run. It is about the ethical culture of the organisation and the behaviour of people on its governing body. To adhere to the code boosts the credibility of an organisation as high-performing, ethical and financially sound.

NALA provided Plain English editing to the working group who developed the code and the Executive Committee decided to adopt it. During 2012 specific actions were taken to bring NALA into line with its requirements and NALA is now compliant with the code.

Numeracy Conference – June 13 in Tallaght IT

The theme for this conference is 'Supporting adult numeracy tutors who are delivering accredited maths provision'. Workshops will include:

- Teaching 'Application of Number' at Level 3
- Teaching 'Functional Maths' at Level 4
- Strategies for teaching 'Pattern and Relationship' and 'Problem Solving' at Level 2
- Strategies for teaching 'Data handling' and 'Shape and Space' at Level 2
- Strategies for teaching algebra at Level 3

For more information contact Fergus Dolan on 01 4127918 or email fdolan@nala.ie

2000 calls and 300 texts received to the NALA Freephone since January 2013

Simply Put.

There are times when plain English works best

Writing and design tips to make your documents easy to read

1. Think of the person you are writing to and why.
2. Be personal - don't be afraid to use 'we' for your organisation and 'you' for the reader.
3. Keep it simple and define any essential jargon and abbreviations.
4. Use a clear font such as Arial or Verdana and use 12 point as standard.
5. Keep sentences to an average of 15 to 20 words.

For more tips on plain English and for information on our plain English editing (including our Plain English Mark) and training service, please visit

www.simplyput.ie



NALA

National Adult Literacy Agency
Áisíneacht Náisiúnta Litearthachta do Aosaigh

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