

Read all about
it **again**:
action learning
project with adult
literacy tutors



NALA

National Adult Literacy Agency
Áisíneacht Náisiúnta Litearthachta do Aosaigh

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The National Adult Literacy Agency

The National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA) is an independent member-based organisation, working on improving adult literacy in Ireland since 1980. We are:

- the voice of adults wishing to improve their literacy skills, and
- committed to raising adult literacy levels.

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Table of Content

Acknowledgements	2
Introduction	3
Principles of good adult literacy work	4
Background to Action Learning Project	4
Section A	
Trying out practice from Read all about it	7
Section B	
Examples of innovative practice	11
Section C	
Discussion	25
Section D	
Tables of practice	29
Useful resources	41

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Introduction

In 2013, the National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA) published a set of case studies describing approaches to teaching reading to adults in the classroom. The report **Read all about it: case studies of teaching reading to adults in Ireland** consisted of six case studies detailing the teaching practice of tutors working with adults around Ireland. The case studies focused largely on the strategies tutors use to teach reading to adult learners. The case studies also showcased general teaching practices, teaching mathematical concepts and the use of technology to teach reading in the classroom.

After the report was launched, NALA invited literacy tutors of adults to take part in a follow-on action-learning project to measure the impact of **Read all about it** by seeing how the practice contained in the case studies was implemented elsewhere.

The purpose of this follow on project was to:

- gather information about the immediate impact of the **Read all about it** case study research;
- provide an opportunity for tutors to develop new knowledge and skills to improve how they teach numeracy;
- produce further teaching and learning ideas and resources to share with other practitioners; and
- describe teaching practice based on **Guidelines for Good Adult Literacy Work** (2012).

The Guidelines for Good Adult Literacy Work sets out and explores the principles, approaches and philosophy which underpin good adult literacy work. The underlying philosophy of the Guidelines is that good adult literacy work is learner-centred and shows a humanistic approach to working with adults. The Guidelines also demonstrate literacy as social practice where the concerns, experience and needs of the learners are the focus of the learning (NALA, 2012).

Principles for good adult literacy work

- Adult literacy work is based on a philosophy of adult education which is concerned with personal development and social action.
- Adult literacy learning is an active and expressive process. Learners have the right to explore their own needs and interests, set their own goals and decide how, where and when they wish to learn.
- Adult literacy work respects different beliefs, cultures and ways of being. An ethical code of trust and confidentiality underpins all aspects of the work.
- Learners' knowledge and skills are vital for the effective organisation of adult literacy work. Learners should have the opportunity to be involved in all aspects of provision.
- Adults learn best when the decision to return to learning is their own, and the environment is supportive, relaxed and friendly (NALA, 2012:p23-4).

The case studies in this report focus on learning and teaching for adults with learning outcomes related to reading strategies. They are intended to be a resource to adult literacy tutors, providing ideas and inspiration about teaching ideas, learning activities and resources. The appendix at the back of the report has tables that contain the main tips on implementing teaching strategies. These tips can be used to inform practice, teaching approaches and lesson plans.

Background to the action learning project

This section outlines how six adult literacy tutors engaged with Read all about it and how they tried out approaches and strategies used to teach literacy. The main focus was on reading development, but in some cases tutors also focused on spelling and writing. **This highlights the connectedness of literacy learning for adults.**

The aspects of literacy development which tutors chose to develop with their learners included:

- using a social practice approach to developing reading;
- developing phonemic awareness to support an auditory-based approach to spelling;
- using phonics to develop reading and improve spelling;
- critical reading;
- free writing tasks;
- using visual and auditory methods to improve reading and spelling skills;
- implementing the four-point reading strategy;
- using newspapers to develop reading with a focus on skipping unfamiliar words to aid fluency.

This project was designed to contribute to NALA's Strategic Plan for 2014-2016, specifically Objective 2 which aims to:

' ... provide supports to improve the quality of teaching and learning. These [supports] include supplying relevant learning materials and information on new and existing effective teaching and learning approaches.'

The project was carried out over a **three-month period** during which a series of meetings took place between the project team and the tutors. The tutors who could not attend meetings contributed by phone and by email.

During the project, the tutors were supported to:

- become familiar with the practice described in the original case studies;
- discuss with each other the teaching approaches or strategies that interested them, or that were relevant to the interests and needs of the learners they were working with;
- identify one or more teaching approach or strategy (from the case studies or inspired by them) and try it out with their learners;
- reflect on the success or challenges of the approaches and strategies they had used;
- reflect on what they had learned about teaching literacy, and about themselves as tutors;
- record their experience using a series of questions designed by the project team; and
- submit a report to the project team answering these questions.

The tutors who completed the project were:

- **Rachel Sirr**, Dublin Adult Learning Centre DALC;
- **Liam O'Callaghan**, Offaly Read & Write Literacy Scheme, Laois and Offaly Education and Training Board;
- **Margaret O'Connor**, Tramore Education Centre, Waterford and Wexford Education and Training Board;
- **Elaine Clifford**, Killarney ABC Centre, Kerry Education and Training Board;
- **Jane Savage**, Killarney ABC Centre, Kerry Education and Training Board; and
- **Stephen Jordan**, South Dublin Adult Education Service, City of Dublin Education and Training Board.

Section A:

Trying out practice from Read all about it

The tutors who took part in the action research felt they and their learners had benefitted from the process. They saw it as a way to provide a space to focus and reflect on their practice in relation to reading and to try out approaches from **Read all about it**. Tutors reported how much they enjoyed using reading approaches which were supported by research evidence. Understanding why using particular reading strategies benefited learners gave tutors greater confidence to persist with strategies. One tutor said:

I like knowing why I'm using a particular strategy. I think this helps me have more conviction and confidence in my practice and makes me more persistent. For example, even if a strategy doesn't seem to be 'working' at first, I'm more likely to persevere with it if I understand the theory behind it.

Tutors noted that developing learners' reading requires significant time. They reported that feeling confident in their own understanding of the reading process was important to them, and working from a 'confidence base' was empowering. One tutor reported:

It has made me realise that I am happiest when I am confident with what I am teaching, but at the same time am willing to think 'outside the box' and my comfort zone to facilitate the learners' needs.

Tutors highlighted the importance of learners' feelings in the learning process in general and reading in particular. Many learners carry their earlier negative experiences with them and these can affect their learning.

Tutors highlighted the importance of adapting practices and resources to keep learners engaged, motivated and confident about their progress. As one tutor noted:

The reading material that the learner is interested in reading is very difficult for a beginner reader. He tackled a piece of text and felt deflated as he could not understand the language even though he is very familiar with the words, orally. I then realised that I had to simplify the text so that he could understand it and begin to gain some confidence with reading.

Another tutor explained:

It was important to choose an article that was interesting and relevant to the learner. The articles selected needed to be chosen with care. Generally, paragraphs were chosen from the beginning of the article on the basis that the paragraph was generally readable for the learner and with content he could relate to. Simon gained in self-confidence. It has enabled him to do what many people do and which most of us take for granted – to read the newspaper.

Tutors recognised the value to learners of helping them to understand how they learn generally, and how they learn to read in particular. In reflecting on their own development, tutors highlighted the importance of reflective practice in the teaching and learning process. They explained how their own learning, not only about reading, but about themselves, developed during the action research projects.

I have learned a lot since starting this process. I have gained a lot from reading the case studies as they validated the work I was doing and offered lots of other interesting and useful ideas, such as word-attack strategies, using teachable moments and using technology to improve spelling, to mention but a few. I became conscious that I needed a more methodical approach to teaching reading, and that is why the four-point reading strategy appealed to me.

My learning during this process has been about discovering my strengths and my weaknesses and how to work on them. I intend to upskill my own knowledge of phonics.

I've learned that I enjoy evidence-based research or research-based practice. I still make assumptions even though I try not to. For example, I tend to think that because I find something helpful, such as mnemonics or spelling 'rules', that other people will find it helpful too. I have learned that this is definitely not the case. I've learned that time spent analysing what worked/what didn't work is extremely valuable.

There is personal fulfilment in having given consideration to a different approach, worked to implement it and then seeing how it is benefitting the learner. It points up the need to be alert and open to exploring new resources and methods.

In this section, tutors described in their own words a process of using the research to make it their own. **Read all about it** was a starting point to customising and adapting ideas and approaches, rather than following what had worked in another context.

One area of the research that tutors particularly welcomed was **support in using phonics** as part of their overall reading development programme. Many tutors lack confidence in using phonics with learners, but **Read all about it** provided an opportunity to incorporate phonics into a reading programme and to identify – and seek out – further training in this area.

Read all about it again:

action learning project with adult literacy tutors

Section

Examples of innovative practice

B:

In this section, six tutors describe the practice they tried out with learners. These are presented as 'mini' case studies and show the complexity of using one or more strategies to develop a new teaching approach in the classroom. The case studies are in the following areas:

- using an auditory-based approach to teaching spelling;
- implementing a four-point strategy including phonics, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension;
- using phonics to develop reading and improve spellings;
- taking a social-practice approach to teaching adult literacy;
- working with reading strategies sentence formation and challenging words; and
- working with reading and free-writing tasks.

Using an auditory-based approach to teaching spelling

Tutor: Rachel Sirr

Rachel is a volunteer tutor who works on a one-to-one basis with a female learner.

Rachel realised early on that the learner had a 'spiky' profile. For example, whilst the learner's reading level and handwriting were good, her spellings needed work. Rachel had noticed that some of the tutors who participated in the **Read all about it** research were successfully using phonics to give learners a 'toolbox' for reading. She began to look at ways to adapt their practice to help her learner improve at spellings. She says 'I began exploring ways to develop her phonemic awareness in order to improve her listening skills, and as a result, her encoding or spelling skills.'

Rachel had been using a phonic approach to show the learner how to break words into syllables and count them out loud. However, she realised that most of her other teaching strategies relied on a visual rather than an auditory approach. For example, she would spend more time using visual strategies such as using a different colour pen to highlight difficult parts of a word, looking at visual patterns within words, identifying root words and finding smaller words within the word. Having tried these approaches with varying degrees of success, she decided to shift the focus and try a more auditory based-approach with the learner.

Auditory-based approach

From early on Rachel noted that the learner could spell words on the Dolch list, especially those she learned at school. However, she needed help with longer or unfamiliar words. The learner also pointed out that often she thinks she is 'not saying the words right'. This made Rachel wonder if she was hearing all the sounds or phonemes in the words. If this was the case, then the learner might be having difficulty with auditory processing. Rachel wanted to try some audio awareness activities to help the learner identify different sounds within words and improve her pronunciation.

Based on an idea in **Read all about it**, at the beginning of each session she started doing auditory exercises as 'warm ups.' She found the 'warm ups' were a good way to introduce the concept of the sound basis of words and to set the direction of the lesson. Some of the exercises included:

- identifying first and last sounds, for example, what is the first sound in family or the last sound in tree;
- deleting sounds at the beginning, end and in the middle of words, for example, say chat without ch or skunk without k; and
- adding sounds for example, add b to end.

The aim of the exercises was to help the learner hear and recognise separate sounds. The exercises encouraged the learner to listen more carefully especially when learning to pronounce and spell a new word.

She also used the following websites

dyslexiahelp.umich.edu/sites/default/files/phon_aw_activities.doc

<http://www.literacyandnumeracyforadults.com/resources/354513>

<http://www.readingrockets.org/article/why-phonological-awareness-important-reading-and-spelling>

Reinforcing the sound basis of words

Throughout each session Rachel tried to give as much attention to the sound basis of words as to the visual basis of words. Over time the learner began to distinguish the different sounds within a word. Rachel would use letter sounds rather than the names of letters, and ask the learner what letter is used to make that sound or make a link with a rhyming word that the learner might know. For example, the learner was having difficulty spelling the word 'issue' but when the tutor pointed out that it's 'tissue' (a word she already knew how to spell) without the t sound, the learner 'got it.'

Practising with nonsense words

Rachel was interested in using 'nonsense'¹ words in the sessions, but she was hesitant to use them in case the learner thought they were childish or silly. However, the learner was happy to 'give it a go' and using nonsense words turned out to be a useful and effective way of teaching spellings. She would use nonsense words with different patterns and sounds and the learner would try to spell them. Rachel found that using nonsense words was a great way of illustrating concepts like how one sound can have more than one letter, for example, sh and ch. As recall or context don't help with nonsense words, the learner just focused on identifying the sounds and then representing the sounds with letters.

Reflective practice

Engaging in this action research process has allowed Rachel to reflect on what she has discovered about herself as a tutor. She has learned that she enjoys learning about and implementing evidence-based or research-based practice. She also likes knowing **why** she uses a particular strategy. She thinks this helps her have more conviction and confidence in her practice and makes her more persistent in her approach to teaching. For example, 'even if a strategy doesn't seem to be working at first, I'm more likely to persevere with it if I understand the theory behind it.'

Rachel thinks she has underestimated the importance of repetition with adult learners. She also thinks that she can be too quick to think that a particular method or strategy isn't working, whereas, it might just need more practice and repetition. She still make assumptions even though she tries not to. For example, 'I tend to think that because I find something helpful, for example, mnemonics or spelling 'rules', that other people will find it helpful too. I have learned that this definitely is not the case!'

During this process, Rachel has learned that time spent analysing what worked and didn't work is extremely valuable. She has also identified that she can be reluctant to try something new if she is not sure it will work. However, she has found that it is worth trying something new 'even if I have doubts about it.'

¹Nonsense words are words that do not make sense and are clearly identified to the learner as words that are not real.

Implementing a four-point strategy including phonics, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension

Tutor: Margaret O'Connor

Margaret tutors a male adult in a one-to-one setting. He is at QQI level 2. As part of her teaching approach with this learner, Margaret chose to implement a four-point strategy using:

- phonics,
- fluency,
- vocabulary, and
- comprehension.

This strategy is based on reading research from the United States. The research aims to produce evidence-based strategies for tutors working with adult basic readers.

Margaret found that some of the practice described in the **Read all about it** case studies validated a lot of her work. The case studies also offered her lots of new and interesting ideas including:

- word-attack strategies;
- using teachable moments; and
- using technology to improve spellings.

Comprehension strategies

The learner Margaret works with is very articulate but has 'poor' reading skills. When he started with Margaret, he had no confidence in his reading skills and 'hated' reading aloud. He used to have to read a piece of text more than once to understand and comprehend it.

Margaret used the **Newell Literacy Programme** with the learner. This methodological approach to teaching phonics helps one learn the sounds of the alphabet. Real and nonsense words are also introduced as part of the process. Having found reading material that the learner was interested in, Margaret began to incorporate the four-point reading strategy. She also incorporated KWL (**K**now, **W**ant to know, **L**earn), a comprehension strategy, before starting to read with the learner.

This involved chatting about:

- what the learner already knows about the subject area;
- what he wants to know about the subject area; and
- what he has learnt (at the end of the session).

How a typical session works

Margaret describes a typical session with the learner as follows:

- start with practising phonics;
- discuss the text to determine the learner's prior knowledge and use the text for clues about the subject matter;
- read the piece of text for the learner;
- get the learner to read the text and underline any difficult or unfamiliar words;
- break down the difficult or unfamiliar words into syllables;
- discuss this process so that the learner better understands problematic words;
- get the learner to look at word endings and root words.

Once this preparatory work is done and when the learner is comfortable to do so, he reads the text aloud. The learner also practises reading the text as 'homework' to help develop fluency. Cloze exercises and comprehension questions help to consolidate understanding of the text.

The learner finds using phonics very useful, but he finds it difficult to come to terms with short and long vowel sounds. He finds that working on unfamiliar or difficult words helps increase his vocabulary, and this is very useful and helpful to him. Gaining knowledge of phonics takes time and practice, but the learner is willing to invest the time and effort to improve his reading.

Next steps

Margaret will continue to use this strategy with the learner and to map progress. She has discovered that asking a learner to 'cold read' can damage their confidence. She began to work with the learner to improve his fluency using timed reading practices, and she plans to continue this strategy. Margaret will incorporate more oral comprehension into a lesson as she realises that, in some cases, the learner could not say anything about the piece of text that had just been read. He was so focused on the words, he lost the meaning.

She also realises that she needs to provide more structured support for the learner before he tackles a piece of text. As mentioned, she plans to do this through pre reading and vocabulary work.

Margaret believes that to become a 'good' phonics teacher, she needs to become much more familiar with how to use phonics as a teaching tool. She intends to develop her skills in this area.

Reflective practice

Margaret describes how she has learned a lot since taking part in this project. She took part so that she could improve her teaching skills, find out what other people were doing and to see if there was any merit in what they were doing for her own teaching strategies. She found the **Read all about it** case studies very interesting to read. She became aware that she needed a more methodical approach to teaching reading – that is why the four-point reading strategy appealed to her.

She had begun to integrate phonics into the teaching of reading, and the idea of incorporating vocabulary, fluency and comprehension just seemed to make sense. Margaret realised that she had to take the whole process more slowly and really work a piece of text so that the learner knows the words, understands them and could use them in a different context. She realised that she was trying to cover too much material. She was not taking enough time to consolidate the new vocabulary introduced.

In the future, she will work on new vocabulary in a more consistent way by breaking down the words into syllables, looking at root words and word endings, and so on. What she has learned is that, like other literacy tutors, she is always searching and is open to new ways to help the learner achieve his goals. Ultimately, she realises she needs to slow down and allow the learning to consolidate before introducing something new. She needs to be more methodical in her approach.

Using phonics to develop reading and improve spellings **Tutor: Jane Savage**

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Jane is an experienced adult literacy tutor who works with a range of learners including:

- an ITABE class of nine with mixed ages and group levels 2/3 two level;
- a groups of young adult learners with learning difficulties/special needs;
- three ESOL classes. The learners in these classes were pre-entry level and ESOL learners with literacy needs including EU nationals and migrants with refugee status.

The class sizes were small with classes having from four to seven learners in them.

How a typical session works

As part of taking part in the action research project, Jane chose to look at:

- using phonics to develop reading and improve spelling; and
- using mini whiteboards and visual and auditory methods to improve memory.

She found all the case studies in **Read all about it** both useful and informative. However, she chose these areas to focus on because she was particularly inspired by Angela Cahill's case study on phonics.

Using phonics with ITABE and ESOL learners

Jane used phonics with the ESOL and ITABE learners. She encouraged the learners to sound out letters, used ABC production worksheets and went online to look at YouTube videos in 'How to teach Reading with Phonics'. She also used word lists from **The Ultimate Phonics Reading Programme Words and Sentences Spencer Learning**.

Jolly Phonics (unadapted) was used with the level 1 learners who engaged with the songs, writing and colouring. However, Jane did not use it with the other groups as she did not feel it was appropriate. If it had been family learning or a pre entry class where most of the learners have young school-going children, she might have tried it. Jane understands the importance of teaching phonics in sequence. However, she found that progress was slow as phonics cannot be practised for too long in any one lesson. Watching the YouTube programme, however, was enjoyed by the learners and it encouraged them to 'sound out' without embarrassment the next set of blends they would be working on.

Phonics practice was particularly helpful for the ITABE group who wanted to improve their spelling and reading. It increased their phonemic awareness and their interest in how words are formed and sounded. It worked well with the pages on prefixes and suffixes in the NALA publication '**Brushing Up**'.

For the EU migrant learners, it was quite different from the way they were used to learning English. Most of these learners have considerably higher listening and understanding skills than speaking or writing skills, and it was a revelation for some of these learners that there was a method that can help them 'decode' the sounds when reading words. They engaged well with this. They appeared to have more confidence when reading and speaking aloud, and discovered words that they were familiar with aurally but had no idea what they looked like when written or printed. Phonic practice had also helped ESOL learners to get accustomed to 'speaking' new sounds.

Visual and auditory methods

Jane used visual and auditory methods as 'starters' across all groups. She used methods such as memory games based on picture/object recall and word snaps. She also used Happy Families with numbers. She found this was a good way to focus the learners' attentions and begin the class in a fun way. Learners were also encouraged to share how they remembered things.

The use of the mini whiteboards

The use of whiteboards was welcomed by the ITABE group as a new method for writing out spelling tests and checking handwriting.

Referendum material was used to encourage critical reading with learners, and they were able to read and find out information in many different ways. Some of the resources Jane used were:

- the NALA monthly worksheet;
- the independent booklet delivered to households which had two levels of understanding; and
- YouTube clips with arguments for and against.

The learners said they liked topical material presented in a variety of ways.

Reflective practice

Jane reflected on how taking part in the project has influenced her practice in the classroom. She reports that, as well as using Jolly Phonics, she would have more phonics reading material and it would be appropriate for adult learners. She would also like to factor in phonics practice as part of every class with relevant reading material designed to accompany the practice. Jane found that her learning during this process has been about discovering her strengths and weaknesses and how to work on them. In the future, and in terms of her own continuing professional development, she intends to upskill her knowledge of phonics.

Taking a social-practice approach to teaching adult literacy

Tutor: Liam O'Callaghan

Liam is a volunteer tutor and works on a one-to-one basis with an adult learner. Liam's learner is a successful tradesman and businessman. He left school with a Group Certificate, but with poor literacy skills. He had a very poor school experience. The learner had a limited general oral vocabulary, and no routine of reading. His self-confidence was also low. One very positive factor was the significant support of his wife as he returned to learning. The learner's goal was to improve his reading and writing skills.

Teaching and Learning Style

As a tutor, Liam feels he does not have a preferred teaching style. Instead, he responds to the learning needs and style of his learner. His general approach lies in the humanist tradition of respect and empathy for his learner. From the start, Liam set about developing an atmosphere of trust, respect and confidentiality.

His specific approach to literacy is one of social practice, focusing on the different literacies his learner needs in the different areas of his life. For example, while a lot of the classwork is based around workplace literacy, the learner recently became a father. This introduced a number of different types of literacies the learner did not previously need, such as reading aloud to a child and communicating with a school.

Both tutor and learner favour a visual style of learning, but Liam is aware that phonic awareness is also important for his learner, and he has attended a number of training workshops and intends to introduce phonics next term.

Resources

Despite the wide range of resources available in the Education Centre, Liam found it difficult to be sure that the resources he selected were the best ones for his learner. He sought and received helpful advice from the Adult Literacy Development Workers in his Centre. He found that:

- the **Treasury Core Skills in English** series worked particularly well;
- resources he made himself that focused specifically on his learner's needs worked very well; and
- encouraging his learner to keep a work vocabulary dictionary was very useful. This was continually updated as work circumstances changed.

Liam also created online word searches filled with his learner's work vocabulary. He made sure his learner could read and spell the basic days of the week, months of the year, and Dolch words. He encouraged his learner to revise them every night. Liam also did work on capital letters and punctuation. He practised paired reading with his learner including reading poetry, the rhythm of which helped his learner to hear the meaning as he read. He varied each night's lesson and set homework which the learner always completed.

Dyslexia

At Liam's suggestion, the learner took a dyslexia screening test. The test was available to take in the Tullamore Further Education Centre. The screening shows whether a learner is 'at risk', 'not at risk' or 'strongly at risk' of dyslexia, and offers support and recommendations to both tutor and learner. Following the screening, they were given suggestions, tools and ideas for managing the dyslexia. Some helpful advice was to:

- concentrate on building up reading fluency rather than focusing on decoding individual words;
- encourage the learner to use context clues to infer the meaning of a word rather than fixating on the word;
- continue to practise paired reading;
- plan activities prior to starting them;
- repeat and revise the work done; and
- use new words in a variety of ways until the words enter the learner's active spoken and written vocabulary.

The learner was encouraged to follow up the screening test with a full assessment if he thought this would be useful to him, or just to contact the Dyslexia Association of Ireland for further information.

Accreditation

Liam's learner has completed two QQI modules this year, one in Level 2 Reading and one in Level 2 Writing. Liam felt that working towards accreditation was key to showing identifiable progress to his learner (and to himself), and helped to focus the tuition. His immediate plan is to continue with Level 2 Modules for this year.

Reflective practice

Liam and his learner got on extremely well from the first session. Feedback to the Education Centre was extremely positive, and the learner would list specific outcomes that he had achieved. For example, reading particular road signs he had never been able to read before, or being able to fill in a form his wife would have previously completed.

Liam says that he sometimes felt uncertain about his practice. He felt inexperienced, and was not sure he was starting at the correct place, and felt that he was maybe wasting his learner's valuable time. Liam was more used to working in an environment of measurable outcomes, and, though familiar with the ethos and practice of adult literacy work, was nevertheless frustrated by the apparent lack of measurable outcomes in adult literacy work.

However, resources were available to Liam. A Resource Worker attended a tuition session with him and his learner to offer reassurance and advice. The feedback from the dyslexia screening test also helped, as did, amongst other things, talking to other tutors, in-house training and attending NALA events.

The centre where Liam is based is planning on introducing a standardised online initial (and review) assessment tool. Liam feels that this is the element that was lacking during his early tutoring experience, and is delighted with its introduction. He would be very happy to mentor any new voluntary tutors in order to encourage and support them, in addition to the advice and support they receive from Development Workers.

Working with reading strategies, sentence formation and challenging words

Tutor: Stephen Jordan

Stephen, a volunteer tutor, has been working with his learner for over a year. The learner first came to the Adult Literacy Centre as a beginner reader. He had knowledge of the alphabet and this was a helpful starting point, as he recognised letters and the sounds each one made. He had little experience or ability, however, in putting letters together to form a word. But is now making some progress and is growing in confidence in his reading skills and ability.

Reading strategy – using local and national newspapers

The main focus of Stephen's sessions with his learner was on improving the learner's reading capacity and capability. For the first few months the teaching and learning emphasis was on becoming familiar with new words, sounds and syllables. As the learner progressed, Stephen moved onto reading text from the **Oxford Reading Tree**. These readers can be geared towards children's interests. However, Stephen found it difficult to access relevant adult content geared towards beginner learners. Initially, the learner read one or two paragraphs and this increased over time. The learner then began reading from both local and national newspapers. He read topics that were of particular interest to him. So, articles on current affairs, cars and local issues were the ones most favoured.

In choosing a relevant article, Stephen thought it best to focus on one that had short appealing stories, with reasonably large print and, where possible, with pictures accompanying them. At the beginning, the learner read the first one or two paragraphs of the article. This suited the learner as he found that these paragraphs usually contained the 'core' information needed to understand the article. The learner found this exercise to be very worthwhile and began to develop more confidence in his ability.

Sentence formation and challenging words

Stephen and the learner worked on reading standalone sentences and sentences which form part of an article or paragraph. The process adopted is that when the learner comes across a challenging word, if pronunciation or meaning is not evident, he passes over it. The words in the rest of the sentence are pronounced and then the learner returns to the problematic word, the sounding and meaning of which is greatly eased when seen in conjunction with the other words in the sentence. For example, be 'careful' as the floor is slippery; I saw an 'accident' on the road and then the ambulance came; "I'm not 'able' to do that as it's too hard. Initially, the learner was reluctant to use this process as he preferred to 'stay' with the difficult word and try to work it out. Moving on was, to him, an indication of failure. Now he recognises that the process is a useful one both in terms of 'dealing' with the challenging word and being able to read the full sentence. The learner now understands that not all words are essential in understanding a sentence or its meaning.

Reflective practice

One of the main things Stephen has learned from taking part in this project is the need to always keep in mind what it is that helps the learner most. He understands that his own ideas and wishes are secondary to those of the learner. Stephen is now much more aware and wary of pushing a personal preferred idea or approach.

It has become clear to him that consultation and agreement with the learner is important, as you engage with him in a new or different teaching method. If the learner appears to be reluctant, for example, to work with reading newspapers or to leave a challenging word in a sentence, then this needs to be respected.

Stephen understands the need to explain the purpose, the value and advantages of adopting a different approach or methodology. If there is still a reluctance, it is preferable to leave the new process and continue with the approach already in use. At a future date, it may be possible to raise the new approach again and see if the learner is open to trying it. Stephen feels it is extremely important to recognise the 'adulthood' of the learner, respecting that they appreciate being consulted about the learning process.

With time, it becomes evident that the pace of learning will be determined by the learner. A tutor may prefer to explore and change further and to advance at a quicker pace, but this must be tempered by learner ease, confidence and ability level.

Stephen believes that there is some personal fulfilment in considering a different approach, working to implement it and then seeing how it is benefitting the learner. It highlights the need to be alert and open to exploring new resources and methods. Equally, if you find that an approach is not working, you discontinue it.

Working with reading and free writing tasks

Tutor: Elaine Clifford

Elaine works with a number of different groups including ITABE learners and learners who are part of a Literacy and Lifeskills Programme. Whilst reading the **Read all about it case** study report, Elaine was particularly drawn to the case study by Fiona Kiernan. In this case study, Fiona outlined how, for her, reading goes beyond the methods of decoding words. She believes that learners learn to read 'more successfully' when the reading is associated with their social, community and work lives.

Reading tasks

Elaine explains how Kerry ETB and Kerry Library have come together to offer adult learners an opportunity to complete The Reading Challenge. This challenge invites learners to read a number of items including:

- poems;
- books; and
- articles on the internet.

Elaine asked the learners to complete a Reading Diary where they comment on each of their 'reading items'. As part of this reading challenge, Elaine used 'The Story of Daniel O'Connell' book with three of her literacy groups. She describes what worked well with lesson plans and ideas, worksheets and tasks and free writing tasks.

Lesson plans and ideas:

The learners were asked to:

- determine how much they currently knew about Daniel O'Connell;
- write up keywords mentioned as part of the discussion;
- write the title of the book and the author (and illustrator, if relevant);
- read part of chapter one;
- discuss the chapter as a group (This helped to check if learners understood the main 'story' in chapter one);
- read this chapter 'in silence';
- do a mind map (with books closed) of the contents of chapter one; and
- write a short summary of the chapter for homework.

Worksheets and tasks:

This involved:

- preparing a worksheet with questions about the various chapters;
- asking learners to search for keywords from the book;
- researching some words mentioned in this book using the internet. For example – Wild Geese; Penal Laws; Tannery, Derrynane House;
- identifying a list of words which learners could read but did not understand; and
- learners writing five or more sentences using words identified.

Free writing task:

Who Am I? Learners were asked to:

- write about themselves with no set rules for the initial draft;
- make corrections based on various suggestions; and
- write a second draft focusing on punctuation, grammar and spelling.

Learners enjoyed the whole process. Elaine used this type of exercise throughout the programme and with different groups.

Reflective practice

Elaine found that engaging in this project reaffirmed that she is flexible in her teaching practice. She realised that she is 'happiest' when confident with 'the what' of what she is teaching. At the same time, she has noticed a willingness to think 'outside the box' and to work outside of her comfort zone. She works to facilitate the needs of the learners and to be sensitive to recognising and responding to their needs.

Section Discussion

C:

This report describes how NALA's **Read all about it** study impacted on and informed the practice of six literacy tutors who took part in the follow-on action learning project. The tutors reported that taking part in the action learning project had:

- inspired them to try out new teaching approaches and strategies as part of their literacy programmes;
- provided them with creative ideas to use in the classroom;
- made them question their assumptions about learners and their learning needs;
- enabled them to 'rediscover' their learning philosophy;
- encouraged them to reflect on aspects of their practice and on their perception of themselves as professionals; and
- offered them an unexpected opportunity to take part in continuing professional development.

The tutors considered their use of teaching strategies and resources and made commitments to use these more effectively to improve their practice. The tutors reported that implementing practice from **Read all about it** helped generate new ideas on how to:

- use specific strategies to teach new topics;
- make fundamental changes to approaches to teaching;
- continue to be creative in their practice;
- extend activities or apply strategies to topics other than the one they were designed for; and
- develop new resources for use with other groups of learners including ESOL and ITABE learners.

Reflective practice

Research suggests that the diversity of adult learners coming to class means many have a wide range of needs and not just in relation to their literacy learning. Learners often carry with them the negative effects of previous learning experiences (NALA 2012). As a consequence, many tutors may feel that in trying to meet adult learners' individual needs, they are required to go beyond a traditional teaching role. They are the facilitator, the motivator, the supporter, the guide and much more.

What is reflective practice?

While there is no universally accepted definition of reflective practice, most definitions share characteristics such as:

- having the space (time and appropriate context) to analyse professional practice;
- explicitly questioning one's professional beliefs and practices;
- being aware of alternative professional beliefs and practices;
- being able to change professional beliefs and practices, where appropriate;
- experimenting and learning from any mistakes, as part of the process of changing professional beliefs and practices;
- tolerating a period of discomfort as part of the process of changing professional beliefs and practices; and
- realising that learning is a process over time, not an event (Hudson et al, 2006)².

Two NALA publications which tutors will find useful in supporting reflective practice are:

- Guidelines for Good Adult Literacy Work (2012), and
- Curriculum Development: An evolving model for adult literacy and numeracy education (2009).

The Guidelines, in particular, offer tutors the opportunity to identify the theoretical or philosophical perspectives that inform and influence their practice.

The tutors who took part in this action learning project reflected on how assumptions they made about learners impacted on and informed their practice. The tutors also reflected on their perception of themselves as tutors. They identified where their strengths, interests, enthusiasm and enjoyment lay and how this informed their approach to teaching.

Helping adults to build on and develop their reading is an important activity. Reading is such a fundamental practice in adults' lives, and experiencing difficulties in reading has an enormous impact on them and their families. This action research project has provided an opportunity for adult literacy practitioners to engage with practitioner-led research which focused on a wide range of reading strategies to support literacy development.

²Hudson, C. (2007) *Pathfinder report: Maths4Life*

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Read all about it again:

action learning project with adult literacy tutors

Section C:

Table A: Topic-based approaches

The following table contains descriptions of individual topics that tutors used to teach specific topics:

Topic	Teaching approach/strategy	Practitioner(s) who adapted/developed it
Auditory-based approach	<p>From early on, Rachel noted that the learner could spell words on the Dolch list, especially those she learned at school. However, she needed help with longer or unfamiliar words. The learner also pointed out that she often thinks she is 'not saying the words right'. This made Rachel wonder if the learner was hearing all the sounds or phonemics in the words. If this was the case, then the learner might be having difficulty with audio processing. Rachel wanted to try some audio awareness activities to help the learner improve her pronunciation.</p> <p>Based on an idea in Read all about it, she started doing auditory exercises as 'warm ups' at the beginning of each session. She found the 'warm ups' were a good way to introduce the concept of the sound basis of words and to set the direction of the lesson. Some of the exercises included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ identifying first and last sounds, for example, what is the first sound in 'family' or the last sound in 'tree';■ deleting sounds at the beginning, end and in the middle of words, for example, say 'chat' without ch or 'skunk' without k; and■ adding sounds for example, add b to 'end'.	Rachel Sirr

Topic	Teaching approach/strategy	Practitioner(s) who adapted/developed it
<p>Auditory-based approach</p>	<p>The aim of the exercises was to help the learner hear and recognise separate sounds. The exercises encouraged the learner to listen more carefully especially when learning to pronounce and spell a new word.</p> <p>Rachel also used the following websites: dyslexiahelp.umich.edu/sites/default/files/phon_aw_activities.doc http://www.literacyandnumeracyforadults.com/resources/354513 http://www.readingrockets.org/article/why-phonological-awareness-important-reading-and-spelling</p>	<p>Rachel Sirr</p>
<p>Reinforcing the sound basis of words</p>	<p>Throughout each session, Rachel tried to give as much attention to the sound basis of words as to the visual basis of words. Over time, the learner began to distinguish the different sounds within a word. Rachel would use letter sounds rather than the names of letters, and ask the learner what letter is used to make that sound or make a link with a rhyming word that the learner might know. For example, the learner was having difficulty spelling the word 'issue' but when the tutor pointed out that its 'tissue' without the t sound, the learner 'got it.'</p>	<p>Rachel Sirr</p>
<p>Practising with nonsense words</p>	<p>Rachel was interested in using 'nonsense'³ words in the sessions, but she was hesitant to use them in case the learner thought they were childish or silly. However, the learner was happy to 'give it a go' and using nonsense words turned out to be a useful and effective way of teaching spellings. She would use nonsense words using different patterns and sounds and the learner would try to spell them. Rachel found that using nonsense words was a great way of illustrating concepts like how one sound can have more than one letter, for example, sh and ch.</p>	<p>Rachel Sirr</p>

³Nonsense words are words that do not make sense and are clearly identified to the learner as words that are not real.

Topic	Teaching approach/strategy	Practitioner(s) who adapted/developed it
Practising with nonsense words	As recall or context don't help with nonsense words, the learner just focused on identifying the sounds and then representing the sounds with letters.	Rachel Sirr
Comprehension strategies	<p>The learner Margaret works with is very articulate but has 'poor' reading skills. When he started with Margaret, he had no confidence in his reading skills and 'hated' reading aloud. He used to have to read a piece of text more than once to understand and comprehend it.</p> <p>Margaret used the Newell Literacy Programme with the learner. This methodological approach to teaching phonics helps one learn the sounds of the alphabet. Real and nonsense words are also introduced as part of the process. Having found reading material that the learner was interested in, Margaret began to incorporate the four-point reading strategy. She also incorporated KWL (Know, Want to know, Learn), a comprehension strategy, before starting to read with the learner.</p> <p>This involved chatting about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ what the learner already knows about the subject area; ■ what he wants to know about the subject area; and ■ what he has learnt (at the end of the session). 	Margaret O'Connor
Using phonics	Jane used phonics with the ESOL and ITABE learners. She encouraged the learners to sound out letters, used ABC production worksheets and went online to look at YouTube videos in 'How to teach Reading with Phonics'. She also used word lists from The Ultimate Phonics Reading Programme Words and Sentences Spencer Learning .	Jane Savage

Topic	Teaching approach/strategy	Practitioner(s) who adapted/developed it
<p>Using phonics</p>	<p>Jolly Phonics (unadapted) was used with the level 1 learners who engaged with the songs, writing and colouring. However, Jane did not use it with the other groups as she did not feel it was appropriate. If it had been family learning or a pre entry class where most of the learners have young school-going children, she might have tried it. Jane understands the importance of teaching phonics in sequence. However, she found that progress was slow as phonics cannot be practised for too long in any one lesson. Watching the YouTube programme, however, was enjoyed by the learners and it encouraged them to 'sound out' without embarrassment the next set of blends they would be working on. Phonics practice was particularly helpful for the ITABE group who wanted to improve their spelling and reading. It increased their phonemic awareness and their interest in how words are formed and sounded. It worked well with the pages on prefixes and suffixes in the NALA publication 'Brushing Up'.</p> <p>For the EU migrant learners, it was quite different from the way they were used to learning English. Most of these learners have considerably higher listening and understanding than speaking or writing skills, and it was a revelation for some of these learners that there was a method that can help them 'decode' the sounds when reading words. They engaged well. They appeared to have more confidence when reading and speaking aloud, and discovered words that they were familiar with aurally but had no idea what they looked like when written or printed. Phonic practice had also helped ESOL learners to get accustomed to 'speaking' new sounds.</p>	<p>Jane Savage</p>
<p>Visual and auditory methods</p>	<p>Jane used Visual and auditory methods as 'starters' across all groups. She used methods such as memory games based on picture/object recall and word snaps.</p>	<p>Jane Savage</p>

Topic	Teaching approach/strategy	Practitioner(s) who adapted/developed it
Visual and auditory methods	<p>She also used Happy Families with numbers. She found this was a good way to focus the learners' attentions and begin the class in a fun way. Learners were also encouraged to share how they remembered things.</p>	Jane Savage
The use of the mini whiteboards	<p>The use of whiteboards was welcomed by the ITABE group as a new method for writing out spelling tests and checking handwriting. Referendum material was used to encourage critical reading with learners, and they were able to read and find out information in many different ways. Some of the resources she used were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ the NALA monthly worksheet; ■ the independent booklet delivered to households which had two levels of understanding; and <p>YouTube clips with arguments for and against. The learners said they liked topical material presented in a variety of ways</p>	Jane Savage
Dyslexia	<p>At Liam's suggestion, the learner took a dyslexia screening test. The test was available to take in the Tullamore Further Education Centre. The screening shows whether a learner is 'at risk', 'not at risk' or 'strongly at risk' of dyslexia, and offers support and recommendations to both tutor and learner. Following the screening, they were given suggestions, tools and ideas for managing the dyslexia. Some helpful advice was to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ concentrate on building up reading fluency rather than focusing on decoding individual words; ■ encourage the learner to use context clues to infer the meaning of a word rather than fixating on the word; ■ continue to practise paired reading; ■ plan activities prior to starting them; ■ repeat and revise the work done, ■ use new words in a variety of ways until the words enter the learner's active spoken and written vocabulary. 	Liam O'Callaghan

Topic	Teaching approach/strategy	Practitioner(s) who adapted/developed it
Dyslexia	The learner was encouraged to follow up the screening test with a full assessment if he thought this would be useful to him, or just to contact the Dyslexia Association of Ireland for further information.	Liam O’Callaghan
Accreditation	Liam’s learner has completed two QQI modules this year, one in Level 2 Reading and one in Level 2 Writing. Liam felt that working towards accreditation was key to showing identifiable progress to his learner (and to himself), and helped to focus the tuition. His immediate plan is to continue with Level 2 Modules for this year.	Liam O’Callaghan
Reading strategy – using local and national newspapers	<p>The main focus of their sessions was on improving the reading capacity and capability of the learner. For the first few months, the teaching and learning emphasis was on becoming familiar with new words, sounds and syllables. As the learner progressed, Stephen moved onto reading ‘simple’ text from the Oxford Reading Tree. These readers can be geared towards children’s interest. However, Stephen found it difficult to access relevant adult content geared towards beginner learners. Initially, the learner read one or two paragraphs and this increased over time. The learner then began reading from both local and national newspapers. He read topics that were of particular interest to him. So, articles on business, finance and politics were generally avoided.</p> <p>In choosing a relevant article, Stephen thought it best to focus on one that had short appealing stories, with reasonably large print and, where possible, with pictures accompanying them. At the beginning, the learner read the first one or two paragraphs of the article. This suited the learner as he found that these paragraphs usually contained the ‘core’ information needed to understand the article. The learner found this exercise to be very worthwhile and began to develop more confidence in his ability to read a newspaper from start to finish.</p>	Stephen Jordan

Topic	Teaching approach/strategy	Practitioner(s) who adapted/developed it
<p>Sentence formation and challenging words</p>	<p>Stephen and the learner worked on reading standalone sentences and sentences which form part of an article or paragraph. The process adopted is that when the learner comes across a challenging word, if pronunciation or meaning is not evident, he passes over it. The words in the rest of the sentence are pronounced and then the learner return to the problematic word, the sounding and meaning of which is greatly eased when seen in conjunction with the other words in the sentence. For example, be 'careful' as the floor is slippery; I saw an 'accident' on the road and then the ambulance came; "I'm not 'able' to do that as it's too hard. Initially, the learner was reluctant to use this process as he preferred to 'stay' with the difficult word and try to work it out. Moving on was to him an indication of failure. Now he recognises that the process is a useful one both in terms of 'dealing' with the challenging word and being able to read the full sentence. The learner now understands that not all words are essential in understanding a sentence or its meaning.</p>	<p>Stephen Jordan</p>
<p>Reading tasks</p>	<p>Elaine explains how Kerry ETB and Kerry Library have come together to offer adult learners an opportunity to complete The Reading Challenge. This challenge invites learners to read a number of items including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ poems; ■ books; and ■ articles on the internet. <p>Elaine asked the learners to complete a Reading Diary where they comment on each of their 'reading items'. As part of this reading challenge, Elaine used 'The Story of Daniel O'Connell' book with three of her literacy groups. She describes what worked well with lesson plans and ideas, worksheets and tasks and free writing tasks.</p>	<p>Elaine Clifford</p>

Topic	Teaching approach/strategy	Practitioner(s) who adapted/developed it
<p>Reading tasks</p>	<p>Lesson plans and ideas: The learners were asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ determine how much they currently knew about Daniel O’Connell; ■ write up keywords mentioned as part of the discussion; ■ write the title of the book and the author (and illustrator if relevant); ■ read part of chapter one; ■ discuss the chapter as a group (This helped to check if learners understood the main ‘story’ in chapter one); ■ read this chapter ‘in silence’; ■ do a mind map (with books closed) of the contents of chapter one; and ■ write a short summary of the chapter for homework. <p>Worksheets and tasks: This involved:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ preparing a worksheet with questions about the various chapters; ■ asking learners to search for keywords from the book; ■ researching some words mentioned in this book using the internet. For example – Wild Geese; Penal Laws; Tannery, Derrynane House; ■ identifying a list of words which learners could read but did not understand; and ■ learners writing five or more sentences using words identified. 	<p>Elaine Clifford</p>
<p>Free writing task</p>	<p>Who Am I? Learners were asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ write about themselves with no set rules for the initial draft; ■ make corrections based on various suggestions; and ■ write a second draft focusing on punctuation, grammar and spelling. <p>Learners enjoyed the whole process. Elaine used this type of exercise throughout the programme and with different groups.</p>	<p>Elaine Clifford</p>

Table B: Reflective practice

Topic	Approach	Practitioner(s) who adapted/ developed it
<p>Reflective practice</p>	<p>Engaging in this action research process has allowed Rachel to reflect on what she has discovered about herself as a tutor. She has learned that she enjoys learning about and implementing evidence-based or research-based practice. She also likes knowing why she uses a particular strategy. She thinks this helps her have more conviction and confidence in her practice, and makes her more persistent in her approach to teaching. For example, she says: ‘even if a strategy doesn’t seem to be working at first, I’m more likely to persevere with it if I understand the theory behind it.’</p> <p>Rachel thinks she has underestimated the importance of repetition with adult learners. She also thinks that she can be too quick to think that a particular method or strategy isn’t working, whereas, it might just need more practice and repetition. She still makes assumptions even though she tries not to. For example, she says: ‘I tend to think that because I find something helpful, for example, mnemonics or spelling “rules”, that other people will find it helpful too. I have learned that this definitely is not the case!’</p> <p>During this process, Rachel has learned that time spent analysing what worked and didn’t work is extremely valuable. She has also identified that she can be reluctant to try something new if she is not sure it will work. However, she has found that it is worth trying something new ‘even if I have doubts about it’.</p>	<p>Rachel Sirr</p>
	<p>She had begun to integrate phonics into the teaching of reading and the idea of incorporating vocabulary, fluency and comprehension just seemed to make sense. Margaret realised that she had to take the whole process more slowly and really work a piece of text so that the learner knows the words, understands them and could use them in a different context.</p>	<p>Margaret O’Connor</p>

Topic	Approach	Practitioner(s) who adapted/ developed it
<p>Reflective practice</p>	<p>She realised that she was trying to cover too much material. She was not taking enough time to consolidate the new vocabulary introduced. In the future, she will work on new vocabulary in a more consistent way by breaking down the words into syllables, looking at root words and word endings, and so on. What she has learned is that, like other literacy tutors, she is always searching for and open to new ways of helping the learner achieve his goals. Ultimately, she realises she needs to slow down and allow the learning to consolidate before introducing something new. She needs to be more methodical in her approach.</p>	<p>Margaret O'Connor</p>
	<p>Jane reflected on how taking part in the project has influenced her practice in the classroom. She reports that, as well as using Jolly Phonics, she would have more phonics reading material and it would be appropriate for adult learners. She would also like to factor phonics practice as part of every class with relevant reading material designed to accompany the practice. Jane found that her learning during this process has been about discovering her strengths and weaknesses and how to work on them. In the future, and in terms of her own continuing professional development, she intends to upskill her knowledge of phonics.</p>	<p>Jane Savage</p>
	<p>Liam and his learner got on extremely well from the first session. Feedback to the Education Centre was extremely positive, and the learner would list specific outcomes that he had achieved. For example, reading particular road signs he had never been able to read before, or being able to fill in a form his wife would have previously completed.</p> <p>Liam says that he sometimes felt uncertain about his practice. He felt inexperienced, and was not sure he was starting at the correct place, and felt that he was maybe wasting his learner's valuable time.</p>	<p>Liam O'Callaghan</p>

Topic	Approach	Practitioner(s) who adapted/ developed it
<p>Reflective practice</p>	<p>Liam was more used to working in an environment of measurable outcomes, and though familiar with the ethos and practice of adult literacy work, he was nevertheless frustrated by the apparent lack of measurable outcomes in adult literacy work.</p> <p>However, resources were available to Liam. A Resource Worker attended a tuition session with him and his learner to offer reassurance and advice. The feedback from the dyslexia screening test also helped; as did, amongst other things, talking to other tutors, in-house training and attending NALA events.</p> <p>The centre where Liam is based is planning on introducing a standardised online initial (and review) assessment tool. Liam feels that this is the element that was lacking during his early tutoring experience, and is delighted with its introduction. Liam would be very happy to mentor any new voluntary tutors in order to encourage and support them, in addition to the advice and support they receive from Development Workers.</p>	<p>Liam O’Callaghan</p>
	<p>One of the main things Stephen has learned from taking part in this project is the need to always keep in mind what it is that helps the learner most. Stephen understands that his own ideas and wishes are secondary to those of the learner. Stephen is now much more aware and wary of pushing a personal preferred idea or approach.</p> <p>It has become clear to him that consultation and agreement with the learner is important, as you engage with him in a new or different teaching method. If the learner appears to be reluctant, for example, to work with reading newspapers or to leave a challenging word in a sentence, then this needs to be respected.</p>	<p>Stephen Jordan</p>

Topic	Approach	Practitioner(s) who adapted/ developed it
<p>Reflective practice</p>	<p>Stephen understands the need to explain the purpose, the value and advantages of adopting a different approach or methodology. If there is still a reluctance, it is preferable to leave the new process and continue with the approach already in use. At a future date, it may be possible to raise the new approach again and see if the learner is open to trying it. Stephen feels it is extremely important to recognise the 'adulthood' of the learner, respecting that they appreciate being consulted about the learning process.</p> <p>With time, it becomes evident that the pace of learning will be determined by the learner. A tutor may prefer to explore and change further and to advance at a quicker pace, but this must be tempered by learner ease, confidence and ability level.</p> <p>Stephen believes that there is some personal fulfilment in considering a different approach, working to implement it and then seeing how it is benefitting the learner. It highlights the need to be alert and open to exploring new resources and methods. Equally, if you find that an approach is not working, you discontinue it.</p>	<p>Stephen Jordan</p>
	<p>Elaine found that engaging in this project reaffirmed that she is flexible in her teaching practice. She realised that she is 'happiest' when confident with 'the what' of what she is teaching. At the same time, she has noticed a willingness to think 'outside the box' and to work outside of her comfort zone. She works to facilitate the needs of the learners and to be sensitive to recognising and responding to their needs.</p>	<p>Elaine Clifford</p>

Useful NALA websites

www.nala.ie

www.nala.ie/tutorscon

www.nala.ie/resources

www.writeon.ie

www.simplyput.ie

www.makingcents.ie

www.healthliteracy.ie

www.helpmykidlearn.ie

www.literacytools.ie

Other useful NALA resources

Brushing Up: improving your spelling, grammar and punctuation

Brushing Up is a learning support workbook for learners and covers the basics of spelling, grammar and punctuation. It is designed as a starting point for learners to use either on their own or with the support of a tutor. The workbook gives information and tips about spelling, grammar and punctuation. It also has exercises to complete and answers are given at the back.

Read all about it: case studies of teaching reading to adults in Ireland 2014.

This report presents six case studies on reading practice in adult literacy in Ireland. The purpose of the research was to gain an in-depth insight into specific reading strategies that support adult literacy development. The case studies focus on different aspects of practice including: approaches to teaching and learning; general teaching practices; specific reading strategies; and the use of technology as part of a blended learning approach in the classroom.

English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL): Blended learning. Project report, 2014.

This report describes the findings of a research project carried out in 2013 by NALA at the request of the Limerick ESOL Partnership. The focus of the project was the use of NALA's interactive website – www.writeon.ie - as part of a blended learning approach with ESOL learners. The ESOL learners who took part in this research confirmed how adopting a blended learning approach using www.writeon.ie along with face-to-face tutoring has helped to meet their learning and language needs.

What really counts next: action learning project with numeracy tutors, 2014.

This report documents the outcomes of an action learning project with numeracy tutors. It describes how it provided an opportunity for tutors to develop new knowledge and skills to improve how they teach numeracy, and produces teaching and learning ideas and resources for numeracy practitioners.

What really counts: case studies of adult numeracy practice in Ireland, 2013.

This report illustrates numeracy practice with a focus on the delivery of learning and teaching on a day-to-day basis. It is intended to be a resource for tutors working in the area of adult numeracy in Ireland, providing ideas and inspiration about teaching, learning activities and resources. The research will inform the continuous professional development workshops and seminars that NALA offers to adult numeracy practitioners.

Adult literacy and numeracy in action: six case studies of practice work in Ireland, 2013.

The six case studies presented in this report highlight literacy and numeracy practice as it happens on the ground. Each case study illustrates how the individual programmes are providing a range of courses to meet the varying and specific needs of the learners attending. The case studies included in this report illustrate that there is no definitive way of ensuring 'best practice' on the ground. However, they do demonstrate aspects of the principles of good adult literacy work including learner-centred learning, literacy as a social practice and a humanistic approach to adult learning.

The Guidelines for Good Adult Literacy Work. NALA, 2012.

The Guidelines for Good Adult Literacy Work is the main document for those working in the adult literacy and numeracy fields and should be used as a reference for teaching and learning. It provides a clear expression of what adult literacy work is about and where it came from. It also aims to establish the right to develop literacy skills as a fundamental human right for adults who wish to improve their literacy and numeracy.

Curriculum development: An evolving model for adult literacy and numeracy education. NALA, 2009.

This evolving model of curriculum development shows how the principles, values and practices described in NALA's publication Guidelines for Good Adult Literacy Work (2012) apply to curriculum development in adult literacy work. This is seen as an evolving model to recognise that the model is likely to change and develop as we all learn more about how curriculum development works in practice in Ireland.

Getting Started in Adult Literacy and Numeracy: A Tutor Training Resource Pack. NALA, 2007.

This pack is for trainers who are facilitating the initial tutor training course or other in-service tutor training events. The pack is designed so that trainers can dip in and out of it to suit the needs of their tutors. The material can be used in a variety of ways and for a variety of tutors. The pack has been divided into sections, which correspond roughly to the key topics which usually form part of an initial tutor training course for adult literacy tutors. Some of the sections include much more material than can be covered in the average two-hour period. It is hoped that trainers can pick and choose sections or parts of sections to be used during the course. Some of the material and sample sessions may also need to be adapted in each case to meet the needs of individual schemes and groups of new tutors.

Curriculum Development in Intensive Tuition in Adult Basic Education. A report on a research project in Ireland 2006 - 2007. NALA, 2009.

The report contains examples of everyday numeracy situations, multiple intelligence, community development links with literacy and numeracy, numeracy case studies, numeracy exercises and case studies.





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