National Adult Literacy Agency

Provider Quality Report 31 January, 2025

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Provider Quality Report

Introduction

This report provides a detailed update on developments since the National Adult Literacy Agency's successful QA approval (Reengagement). It is intended to give a focus and purpose to the structures and systems put in place through that process.

The main functions of provider's quality assurance systems are to:

- assure the integrity of processes such as programme development and assessment, so that awards made to learners are consistent with the award standards.
- monitor the quality of programmes, primarily through the experience of learners and the feedback from independent evaluation
- solidify and disseminate good practice
- address any issues arising which impact on quality.

The purpose of QA Approval was to ensure that each provider has the appropriate quality assurance system and structures to carry out and oversee these functions.

The purpose of this inaugural report is to identify / describe / supply as appropriate:

- Progress in relation to specific advice, if any, given by the QA Approval panel in its report. (Ref 1.1 below)
- Quality initiatives carried out or planned which are in addition to advice given in the report. (Ref
 1.2 and 1.3 below)
- Activity by the governance committee(s) established in preparation for the QA Approval process. (Ref 2.1 to 2.3 below)
- Issues, positive and/or negative, identified by learners as part of the learner feedback processes. (Ref 3.1 below)
- Issues, positive and/or negative, identified by internal verifiers and external authenticators as part of the quality assurance of assessment processes. (Ref 3.2 below)
- Recommendations of Academic Council / Quality Committee following its review of statistical and other reports supplied by QQI in October 2023. (Ref 3.3 below)
- Issues pertaining to Academic Integrity and Award Standards as evidenced through assessment. (Ref 3.3 and 3.4 below)
- Quantitative data on validated programmes delivered over a 12-month period. (Ref 4.1 below and spreadsheet attached)
- Relevant CPD taken by staff members. (Ref 5.1 below)

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This is the Provider Quality Report for the National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA)

It is to be submitted by 31 January 2025.

URL of published QA procedures: https://www.nala.ie/publications/nala-quality-assurance-manual/

The report has been approved by Education, Training and Assessment Subcommittee (ETA) at its meeting of 20 February 2025.

Signed

Eleagor Nell

Dr. Eleanor Neff, Chairperson

1.0 Enhancements of QA System

1.1 Update on implementation of conditions and / or specific advice set out in the QA Approval Panel Report

Please provide an update on the status of implementation of outstanding conditions, if any, and / or specific advice set out in the QA approval panel report i.e. completed, in process, not started. For those completed, briefly describe actions taken.

Add rows as necessary and please delete guide text before submission.

Relevant Core QA Guideline	Condition / Specific Advice from Panel Report	Action(s) Taken	Planned / Actual Completion Date
1	Mandatory change 1 NALA should review its new software in light of the QQI's Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines for Providers of Blended Learning Programmes and its Assessment and Standards document 2013 to ensure that NALA will be compliant with these guidelines. NALA should provide an action plan with associated timelines to indicate how the new software will meet these guidelines, specifically para. 3.2.3 'There are robust arrangements in place across the organisation to confirm the identity of remote learners and mitigate against fraudulent practices, attempts to gain unfair advantage, or academic malpractice'. This Action Plan will allow NALA to seek guidance as to where there is compliance as well as where gaps might exist, to allow NALA to work to address these gaps In addition, given that the current	 basis. D2L partners with Amazon Web Services to provide a highly secure, durable and available infrastructure for deploying the Brightspace platform: https://www.d2l.com/security/ 	

Relevant Core QA Guideline	Condition / Specific Advice from Panel Report	Αc	ction(s) Taken	Planned / Actual Completion Date
QA Guideline	IT system does not have a Safety Certificate, NALA should produce a contingency plan that indicates how any failure in the existing system will be addressed, prior to having a new system in place. Follow on communication with the Panel in relation to mandatory change 1: The Panel received further information in relation to the new website software provider including an action plan and timelines for the new eLearning platform. It was noted by the Panel that that the new Platform will be operational in January 2020. In addition, NALA submitted a detailed document that summarises how the new platform and its service provider will ensure compliance with relevant	•	courses the learner is signed up for, the progress the learner has made, any results or grades posted for the learner. Learners give active consent regarding the use of their data. They need to tick to agree to the use of their personal data which is explained in plain English in the privacy policy. https://www.learnwithnala.ie/catalog?pagename=privacy-statement	Completion Date
	guidelines on blended learning. The Panel welcomed the fact that the new platform would have the capacity to identify the IP address from which learners attempt their assessments, and that these could be tracked by NALA. The panel were also pleased to note that there would be a security certificate in place and			

Relevant Core QA Guideline	Condition / Specific Advice from Panel Report	Action(s) Taken	Planned / Actual Completion Date
	learners would be required to give active consent		
	regarding the use of their data to bring the system in line		
	with Data Protection requirements. The panel was		
	satisfied that the action plan submitted by NALA		
	indicated that all the relevant guidelines on blended		
	learning would be met by the new platform. The Panel		
	felt that it would be important to review this assertion		
	when the website is operational in early 2020. In		
	addition, the Panel was concerned that, while the		
	contingency plan of the service provider is noted, NALA		
	had not provided its own institutional contingency plan,		
	that is, what NALA will do in the event that the service		
	provider cannot deliver, such as in the case of		
	insolvency in advance of the reconvene meeting. The		
	Panel considered that to		
	satisfy paragraph 3.2.2 of the QQI's Statutory Quality		
	Assurance Guidelines for Providers of Blended Learning		
	Programmes, such a contingency plan was required.		
	NALA's Business Contingency Plan, which was		
	referenced in the original documentation provided to the		
	panel, was subsequently provided to the Panel and the		
	Panel agreed that this concern was now addressed.		
	The Panel was informed that there shall be no further		
	assessments through WriteOn in 2019 and the current		

Relevant Core QA Guideline	Condition / Specific Advice from Panel Report	Action(s) Taken	Planned / Actual Completion Date
	website will not be used again. Therefore, the Panel had		
	no remaining concerns regarding the existing system.		
	Mandatory change 2	There is one Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)	Completed
	There should be a number of MoU templates for each	for Learn with NALA Registered Centres. The MoU	2020
	type of Centre/second provider that uses Write-On for	sets out the terms and understanding between	
	the certification of learners through NALA. The MoUs	NALA and a centre for the use of NALA's eLearning	
	should clarify the responsibilities of these Centres for	website Learn with NALA.	
	the conditions of assessment, i.e. how the Centres	https://www.nala.ie/publications/learn-with-nala-	
	manage assessment. Where a Centre also has a	memorandum-of-understanding/	
	teaching and learning role, the MoU should clarify		
	roles and responsibilities in this regard.		
	Follow on communication with the Panel in		
	relation to mandatory change 2:		
	The Panel received amended MoUs, one for Teaching		
	and Learning Centres and one for Non-Teaching and		
	Learning Centres. The panel was pleased to note the		
	additions to the MoUs in particular around assessment		
	requirements and the role of the Centres in this		
	regard. They considered that this mandatory change		
	has been met. They agreed further Specific Advice in		
	relation to the MoUs:		
	1. Given the alignment between the two MoU		
	templates there should be one MoU template		
	going forward.		

Relevant Core QA Guideline	Condition / Specific Advice from Panel Report	Action(s) Taken	Planned / Actual Completion Date
	2. At the top of the MoU, the Centre should state how		
	it will engage with the platform and learners and the		
	MoU be tailored to reflect this.		
	3. The purpose of the MoU should be revised to		
	indicate that the main purpose of the MoU is to		
	state the relationship between NALA and the Centre		
	and the roles and responsibilities of each.		
	4. NALA should give consideration as to how it should		
	satisfy itself that the Centres remain in compliance		
	with the terms of the MoU.		
	Mandatory change 3	There are two External Authenticators on the NALA	
	NALA should revise its External Authentication Policy	panel at all times. Being placed on the panel does not	
	and Procedures in relation to the recruiting and training	guarantee employment during this period. Currently	
	of External Authenticators. The Panel agrees that	there are two rounds of authentication each year. The	
	NALA should appoint at least a second External	External Authenticators are placed on the NALA panel	
	Authenticator and have at least two EAs operating in	for a period of four years. The External Authenticators	Completed 2020
	each certification process given the numbers of	can carry out up to four rounds of authentication	
	learners going forward for assessment in each period.	within this period of four years. A new External	
		Authenticator will be appointed after the four-year	
	Follow on communication with the Panel in relation	period has passed or after four rounds of	
	to mandatory change 2:	authentication. A period of four rounds must pass	

Relevant Core QA Guideline	Condition / Specific Advice from Panel Report	Action(s) Taken	Planned / Actual Completion Date
	A revised External Authentication Policy was submitted. The Panel noted the revised External Authentication Policy, and that two External Authenticators shall be on the EA Panel. The Panel therefore agreed that this mandatory change has been met. The Panel agrees further Specific Advice in relation to External Authentication, see 6.2 below.	before previously employed External Authenticators can be employed again	
	Specific advice 1 The Panel recommends that NALA revises its programmes and submits them to QQI for validation as soon as possible, to inform both its blended learning approach and compliance with QQI guidelines, and the balance of teaching, learning and assessment. This will address the weaknesses identified by this re-engagement process and will ensure that the new IT system being developed will meet the requirements of the newly validated programmes.	NALA is in the process of putting forward it's Level 1 programme for validation with QQI. This is scheduled to happen in 2025. The next phase is to put Level 2 and Level 3 forward for re-validation.	Ongoing
	Specific advice 2 The Panel recommends that the External Authentication group should serve as a Results Approval Panel, and that the Education, Training and Assessment Sub-committee should maintain oversight	This change was made. The Results Approval Panel is made up of the Internal Verifier, a member of management and a member of the LWN Team. Once the results are approved the data can be submitted to QQI. The data is uploaded to the QQI QBS system. Further operational details on this can	Completed and ongoing

Relevant Core QA Guideline	Condition / Specific Advice from Panel Report	Action(s) Taken	Planned / Actual Completion Date	
	of results rather than it approving results. This should	be found in the LWN Administration Guidelines		
	remove this workload	(available on request)		
	from the Education, Training and Assessment			
	Committee to allow time for more quality assurance			
	policy and enhancement/improvement considerations.			
	Specific advice 3	The Internal Verification panel is made up of the	Completed	
	There should be further differentiation between the	Internal Verifier, a member of management,	2020 and	
	Internal Verification Panel and the External	members of the LWN Team and a learner	ongoing	
	Authentication Panel, to emphasise the separation	representative from the Student Subcommittee or		
	and differentiation of both Panels' roles and	the NALA Board.		
	responsibilities.	The Results Approval Panel is made up of the		
		Internal Verifier, a member of management and a		
		member of the LWN Team.		
		The Results Approval Panel carry out the results		
		approval process and the Education, Training and		
		Assessment Subcommittee have oversight of this		
		process.		
	Specific advice 4	This was implemented and a review of work takes	Completed	
	The Panel recommends that the Education, Training	place at the end of each year. The Terms of	November 2020	
	and Assessment Sub-committee should embed a plan	Reference for the Education, Training and	and is ongoing	
	for reflecting on its work over time. The Panel	Assessment Subcommittee have also been		
	considers that this would result in the revision of its	reviewed and were updated in 2021, 2022 and		
	terms of reference to formalise its important role in	2024.		
	quality assurance and enhancement.			

Relevant Core QA Guideline	Condition / Specific Advice from Panel Report	Action(s) Taken	Planned / Actual Completion Date
	Specific advice 5	The Innovation Manager and QQI Coordinator both	This was
	The Panel commends the creation of the roles of	sit on the Education, Training and Assessment	already in place
	Innovation Manager and QQI Co-ordinator. It	Subcommittee.	from 2018 and
	recommends that these roles could be strengthened		is ongoing
	further through membership of relevant sub-		
	committees, in particular the Education, Training and		
	Assessment Sub-committee.		

Commentary and Reflections (what have you learned, if anything, from addressing the advice given by the QA Approval panel at the meeting and in the panel report)

	Mandatory change 1	The move from WriteOn to D2L's Brightspace was	
		already in train at the time of the panel meeting so	
		many of the conditions were met through the move to	
		this new LMS. The advice around creating an action	
		plan was useful and it clearly stated the actions	
		needed to be taken, who was responsible and the	
2		timeline for this.	
	Mandatory change 3	This was useful advice. The panel of External	
		Authenticators is working well and has brought new	
		insights into the programmes.	
	Specific advice 2	This advice has proved to be very useful. The	
		External Authentication Panel is now called the	
		Results Approval Panel, and they are responsible for	

Relevant Core QA Guideline	Condition / Specific Advice from Panel Report	Action(s) Taken	Planned / Actual Completion Date
		approving the results. The Education, Training and	
		Assessment Subcommittee have oversight of this	
		process. This has given them more time to focus on	
		other areas and they are satisfied with this change.	
	Specific advice 4	This has been useful advice. The Education,	
		Training and Assessment Subcommittee reflect on	
		their work at the end of each year and the Terms of	
		Reference has been updated three times since this	
		advice was given.	

1.2 Update on Other Quality Initiatives

Please provide an update on any other initiatives, not prompted by advice given by the QA approval panel, intended to enhance quality of programmes and services.

Add rows as necessary and please delete guide text before submission.

No.	Quality Initiative	Issue being addressed by this initiative	Update on Status Provide brief update on status, whether completed or in progress.	Reference to updated/new policy or procedure
1	Compliance with QQI Guidelines for providers of blended and fully online programmes	Academic integrity System and sustainability Update policies and procedures Staff development Learner support and information	NALA has completed a gap analysis and action plan that addresses these areas and includes: - Academic integrity policy (complete) - Environmental Sustainability Policy (complete) - Updated Business Continuity Plan (in progress) - Updated Admissions Procedure (In progress) - Monitoring framework (In progress)	Academic Integrity policy (new) https://www.nala.ie/publications/nala- quality-assurance-manual/ Business Continuity Plan (updated) Environmental Sustainability Policy (updated)
2	Usability and accessibility	Analysing technical developments on Learn with NALA in relation to academic	NALA created a technical working group to advise NALA on technical	Relevant updated policies will go to the ETA and NALA Board in 2025

	Compliance with QQI	integrity, verification of learner	developments on Learn with NALA in	
	Guidelines	identity, accessibility.	response to:	
			- QQI Guidelines for Providers of	
			Blended and Fully Online Learning	
			Programmes	
			- Findings from NALA's 2023	
			usability study	
			- Findings from NALA's 2023	
			accessibility audit	
			- Any other areas of technical	
			development where emerging	
			trends such as Artificial Intelligence	
			(AI) may impact Learn with NALA	
	Governance	Education, Training and	The ETA Terms of Reference were	Education, Training and Assessment
3		Assessment Subcommittee	updated in 2021, 2022 and 2024.	Subcommittee Terms of Reference
3		Terms of Reference		https://www.nala.ie/publications/nala-
				quality-assurance-manual/

Commentary and Reflections (comment on the effectiveness to date of any quality initiatives completed)

NALA has examined the QQI guidelines for providers of blended and fully online programmes and has carried out a gap analysis and has completed an action plan that is themed into five areas. To further investigate technical considerations NALA set up a Technical Working Group in 2024 to examine these areas. This has proved to be very beneficial and insightful. The composition of the working groups consists of experts in this area from both the Further Education sector and Higher Education sector.

1.4 What has Worked / Not Worked

Give a brief overview of what you feel has worked well arising from your new quality assurance systems

- Education Training and Assessment Subcommittee has been enhanced
- Set up of the Technical Working Group
- Analysis of Learn with NALA against the QQI guidelines for providers of blended and fully online programmes
- Enhanced information on programmes and communications to learners

Give a brief overview of what you feel has not worked in your new quality assurance system and which you may discontinue

Validation is progressing for Level 1. Re-validation for Level 2 and Level 3 will take place after this. We may need to explore systems to see how this can progress at a faster pace.

2.0 Academic Governance Committee Activity

(e.g., Academic Council, Quality Committee or equivalent, hereafter called academic governance committee)

2.1 Mission

What is the mission of the academic governance committee? If it doesn't have a formal mission, please supply its terms of reference.

The Education, Training and Assessment Subcommittee (ETA) takes delegated responsibility on behalf of the Board to strategically review plans, policies and procedures relating to education, training and assessment at the National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA) in the context of:

- the identified needs of NALA's Practice and Innovation team;
- NALA's Quality Assurance Manual for Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) assessment, accreditation and certification;
- best practice;
- national guidelines and strategies; and
- NALA's Strategic Plans.

2.2 Number of meetings and attendance

How many times has the academic governance committee met since establishment?

Date of establishment	6 June	Total number of meetings to date	25
Date of establishment	2018	Total number of meetings to date	20

Meeting Date	Number of Committee Members in attendance (e.g. X	
Meeting Date	attended out of X total members)	
14 March 2024	7 out of 8 (plus 5 NALA Staff)	
06 June 2024	4 out of 7 (incorporeal meeting)	
03 October 2024	4 out of 7 (plus 2 NALA Staff)	
28 November 2024	6 out of 7 (Plus 3 NALA Staff)	

2.3 Agenda for Academic Governance Oversight Meetings

Does the academic governance committee have a standing agenda? If so, please include the items here.

Standing Agenda Items	
Conflicts of interest	
2. Minutes of previous meeting	
3. Matters arising	
4. Date of next meeting	

3.0 Feedback Received, Issues Identified and Actions Taken

3.1 Summary of Feedback from Learners

What were the primary themes emerging from learner feedback, both positive and negative. What actions have been taken in response?

No.	Primary Themes emerging from Learner Feedback in last 12 months	Programme Area(s)	Summary of Actions Taken as a Result
1	Clarity required on portfolio task instructions	Digital Media, Career Preparation, Listening & Speaking	 Instructions updated on VLE to be clearer for learner: A breakdown of the task into simpler steps Expectations and requirements clearly stated All materials for the learner updated and included such as CV templates.
2	Templates required for portfolio task updated to clarify instruction	Digital Media, Career Preparation, Listening & Speaking	Templates updated to give precise instructions for learners, removing all ambiguity. Removed any reference to phrases such as 'State' instead added in phrases such as 'List 4 items' to ensure clarity for learners.
3	Navigation on LWN Platform for those getting started can be confusing	LWN VLE platform	New Welcome Widget implemented. Getting started guidance materials (videos, help section updates) provided, and guidance sessions offered on demand to learners. New Getting Started on LWN online drop-in sessions to be piloted biweekly in 2025.
4	Learners who need support are not always reaching out to NALA	LWN VLE platform	Request a tutor form developed and implemented. Request resources form development and implemented. Targeted outreach to learners who have completed some but not all assessment implemented. Open group sessions implemented. New Learner E-zine developed and implemented. New learner welcome journey series development and implemented.

Confirm date(s) that academic governance committee received summaries of learner feedback for consideration.

Results approval panel meeting Round 39: 7 June 2024

Results approval panel meeting Round 40: 11 December 2024

3.2 Summary of Issues Identified through QA Activities

No.	Summary of Issues Identified in IV/ EA / RAP / Monitoring Reports	Summary of Actions Taken as a Result
1	Portfolio task instructions and templates required updating for improved clarity for learners.	The portfolio task pages on the VLE and templates for portfolio work were updated, with improved instruction and guidance, providing better clarity for learners.
2	Submission of evidence for portfolios on certain courses (Listening & Speaking, Career Prep, Digital Media) could be enhanced by implementing audio recorded evidence of learner submissions.	Exploration of the feasibility of recording audio of learner interviews and other work is to be explored as it poses a few issues around data storage, including cost, and security, GDPR etc.
3	Feedback to learners could be standardised and enhanced to ensure consistency.	A new project focusing on improving feedback consistency and quality is to be created and completed in 2025.
4	Consistency of application of award standards could be improved	Assessment standards for portfolio assessment of one minor award in one round were incorrectly applied by an internal assessor. The submissions that did not meet the standard were withdrawn. The learners were contacted and supported to complete the task to pass the course. All internal assessors were reminded of the standards and training was delivered. A project to clearly set out assessment standards for all portfolio tasks with assessment rubrics is underway.

Confirm date(s) that academic governance committee reviewed Internal Verifier (IV), External Authenticator (EA) or other internal monitoring reports.	Round 39 Results Approval Panel: 7 th June 2024 ETA Subcommittee meeting 28 th November 2024 Round 40 Results Approval Panel: 11 th December 2024	
	The ETA Subcommittee oversaw results and actions from Round 39. The	
List actions taken, if any, following direction from academic	ETA requested further detail on the figures around the centres worked	
governance committee arising from review of these reports	with, including the breakdown between ETB and non-ETB. This was clarified in further reports to the ETA.	

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3.3 Summary of Issues identified through review of activity reports

Having reviewed the statistical reports supplied by QQI on programme validation, certification activity and grades distribution benchmarks, has the academic governance committee identified any issues arising and / or actions required?

No.	Summary of Issues Identified	Summary of Actions Required as a Result
1	None	n/a
2		

3.4 Summary of Issues – Academic Integrity and Award Standards

Academic Integrity

Has the academic governance committee received data on cases of academic misconduct / cheating or been made aware of any risks to the integrity of QQI awards and, if so, what were the main issues arising? What actions have been taken in response?

No.	Summary of Issues Identified	Summary of Actions Required as a Result
1	None	n/a
2		

Awards Standards as evidenced through assessment

Has the academic governance committee received reports on maintenance of QQI award standards and, if so, what were the main issues arising? What actions have been taken in response?

No.	Summary of Issues Identified	Summary of Actions Required as a Result
1	None	n/a
2		

4.0 Information on Validated Programmes

4.1 Programme Metrics

Using the attached spreadsheet listing all your validated programmes, please supply the following data per programme delivered during period January to December of the last full year:

Provide			January 2024 to
r Name	National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA)	Period:	December 2024

Prog. Code*	Programme Title*	Numbe r of Course s	Total Learner s Enrolle d	Number of Learners who Complete d (All courses)	Number of Learner s who did not Complet e (All courses)	Number of Learners achieving QQI certificati on	Completio n Rate	Non Completio n Rate	Certificati on Rate
PG1064 2	Words and numbers in everyday life (component)	12	1091	745	346	727	68%	32%	66.64%
PG1030 2	WriteOn 3!	12	892	553	339	536	62%	38%	60.09%

Note: courses leading to minor awards are separately offered. The above data per programme represents learners enrolled on any of the 12 courses and who completed any of the 12 courses.

- a. Number of courses offered1:
- b. Total number of learners enrolled ²on all courses:
- c. Total number of learners who completed their course³.

¹Courses: Instances of a validated programme started in the period.

² Enrolled: A learner is enrolled on the course if they register and attend at least 25% of the directed learning sessions on the course.

³ **Completion**: A learner who completes the course has attended 75% of the directed learning sessions on the course.

- d. Total number of learners who did not complete the course.4
- e. Total number of learners who achieved a QQI award.5

4.2 Validated programmes for withdrawal

Using the attached spreadsheet listing all your validated programmes, please identify any programme which you no longer wish to have validated by QQI. Note that validated programmes you retain will be expected to be submitted for fresh validation in due course.

N/A

5.0 Continuing Professional Development (CPD)

5.1 CPD opportunities availed of

Please provide details on the CPD opportunities availed of by your staff and tutors over the past 12 months. Include details on the name of the event(s) / programme(s) attended and the roles who attended each.

No.	Name of event / programme	Date attended	Attended by (role)
1	D2L Connection	October 2024	eLearning Engagement Officer
2	D2L Fusion	July 2024	eLearning Engagement Officer, eLearning Development Coordinator
3	D2L Brightspace Connect	June 2024	eLearning Developer
4	Specialist Certificate in Accessibility and Universal Design	March-September 2024	eLearning Developer
5	Data analysis and visualisation	September - December 2024	eLearning Development Coordinator
6	GDPR training	January-December 2024	All staff

⁴ Non-Completion: this is the number of enrolled learners who, for whatever reason, did not complete the course i.e. attended at least 25% but less than 75% of directed learning sessions.

⁵ **Certification**: The QQI award achieved may be of any class i.e. major, minor(s) or special purpose.

7	Manual handling	January-December 2024	All staff
8	Working with vulnerable people	May – September 2024	Learn with NALA Support Officers (2), Adult Literacy Educators (5)
9	Inter-cultural training	November 2024	All staff
10	All-Island Social Security Network Conference	June 2024	Innovation Manager
11	NALA Tutor Forum	January 2024	Adult Literacy Educators (5)
12	NALA Digital teaching and learning webinar series	March 2024	Adult Literacy Educators (5)