



AchieveAbility Interventions: A Framework for Whole Class Learning drawn from SpLD Work.

The key resources for stage 1 are in the AchieveAbility Interventions publication on pages 13-34. These resources can be utilised in original from the publication or from the digital version on the CD ROM. This toolkit is a simplified text of the main elements of stage 1 and has been made available on the AchieveAbility Interventions CD ROM for ease of use.

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Additional resources and information are available in the final section of the AchieveAbility Interventions Framework Publication and on the CD ROM.

SpLD Awareness

The training session includes detailed information on the potential impact, cross over between and co-occurrence of Specific Learning Differences. However the summary definitions of SpLD below have been provided for reference purposes.

Dyslexia – an overview (drawn from “A Framework for Understanding Dyslexia” DfES 2004)

The word 'dyslexia' comes from the Greek 'dys-', meaning difficulty with, and '-lexia', meaning words or language.

There are many reasons why people find it difficult to learn to read, write, or spell. For many such people, those difficulties can be explained by the normal range of opportunity and experience.

For others, however, those difficulties do not seem so easily explainable. Such learners may be‘dyslexic’. We understand dyslexia to be a specific difficulty, typically characterised by an unusual balance of skills. Dyslexia affects information processing (receiving, holding, retrieving and structuring information) and the speed of processing information. It therefore has an impact on skills such as reading, writing, using symbols and carrying out calculations. However, there are many differing definitions; dyslexia is an umbrella term.

It is important to recognise that:

- dyslexia is not related to intelligence and can occur in severe, moderate, or mild forms
- people with dyslexia have their own individual profiles of strengths and weaknesses; no two people are exactly the same and the impact of dyslexia on each individual is different
- dyslexia does not only affect literacy skills such as spelling, but most of what we know about it relates to its relationship to language and literacy
- dyslexia may overlap with related conditions such as dyspraxia or attention-deficit disorder (with or without hyperactivity) and dysphasia (total or partial loss of verbal language)
- most people appear to be born with dyslexia, although others acquire it through accident or illness
- many people with dyslexia have a family member with the same condition
- some researchers think that dyslexia affects more men than women; others think that roughly the same numbers of males as females are affected.

Dyslexia is legally recognised as a disability under SENDA legislation and the Disability Discrimination Act. However it can be looked at in another way – all learners have different ways of learning, and not everyone accepts that dyslexic learners are disabled. For further information see the De Montfort University website http://www.dmu.ac.uk/study/student_services/slas/dyslexia/what_is.jsp

Further definitions of and information about dyslexia can be found in the Additional Resources Section on page 61 and on the accompanying CD ROM.

Dyspraxia – an overview (drawn from the Dyspraxia Foundation <http://www.dyspraxiafoundation.org.uk>)

Developmental dyspraxia is an impairment or immaturity of the organisation of movement. It is an immaturity in the way that the brain processes information, which results in messages not being properly or fully transmitted.

The term dyspraxia comes from the word praxis, which means 'doing, acting'. Dyspraxia affects the planning of what to do and how to do it. It is associated with problems of perception, language and thought.

Dyspraxia is thought to affect up to ten per cent of the population and up to two per cent severely. Males are four times more likely to be affected than females. Dyspraxia sometimes runs in families. There may be an overlap with other learning differences or related conditions such as Attention Deficit Disorder.

Other names for dyspraxia include Developmental Co-ordination Disorder (DCD), Perceptuo-Motor Dysfunction, and Motor Learning Difficulties. It used to be known as Minimal Brain Damage and Clumsy Child Syndrome. Statistically, it is likely that one child is affected in every class of 30 children.

The experience of people with dyspraxia may vary as widely as those with dyslexia, but they will usually encounter a combination of difficulties that may include any of the following.

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- Motor co-ordination skills: Poor balance / poor posture and fatigue. Clumsy gait and movement and a lack of manual dexterity. Poor hand to eye co-ordination.
- Perception: Poor visual perception, lack of spatial relationships awareness / inadequate sense of direction. Little sense of time, speed, distance or weight.
- Learning, thought and memory: Difficulty with the planning and organising of thought / and concentration. Poor memory. Problems with maths, reading and spelling and writing. Difficulty in following instructions.
- Speech and language: difficulty with the content, clarity and sequence of language.
- Emotion and behaviour: difficulty in listening to people/ picking up non-verbal signals or judging tone or pitch of voice. Tendency to take things literally and difficulty in adapting to situations.

Many of these characteristics are not unique to people with dyspraxia and not even the most severe case will have all the above characteristics. But adults with dyspraxia will tend to have more than their fair share of co-ordination and perceptual difficulties.

(from the University of Oxford Equal Opportunities information
<http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/eop/disab/Dysp.pdf/>)

Further definitions of and information about dyspraxia can be found in the Additional Resources Section on page 61 and on the accompanying CD ROM.

Dyscalculia

There are many interpretations of dyscalculia, however respected authorities in this field such as Butterworth, Sharma, Miles and Chinn agree that the nature of dyscalculia rests with the inability to see, handle and understand numbers. The inability occurs at the concrete level but especially at the abstract level.

An overview - (drawn from <http://www.bbc.co.uk/skillswise/tutors/expertcolumn/dyscalculia/>)

Many learners have difficulty learning mathematics for a variety of reasons. Not all of these learners have dyscalculia. However, there are some basic areas of mathematical activity in everyday life that may indicate a dyscalculic tendency if persistently difficult and frustrating for a person.

In very simple terms, analogous to dyslexia - which is dysfunction in the reception, comprehension, or production of linguistic information - dyscalculia can be defined as the dysfunction in the reception, comprehension, or production of quantitative and spatial information.

Dyscalculia is a collection of symptoms of learning disability involving the most basic aspect of arithmetical skills. On the surface, these relate to basic concepts such as: telling the time, calculating prices and handling change, and measuring and estimating things such as temperature and speed.

Dyscalculia is an individual's difficulty in conceptualizing numbers, number relationships, outcomes of numerical operations and estimation. Dyscalculia manifests in a person as difficulty with:

- Mastering arithmetic facts by the traditional methods of teaching.
- Dealing with exchange of money, handling a bank account, giving or receiving change, and tipping.
- Learning abstract concepts of time, direction, schedules, telling / keeping track of time, and the sequence of past or future events.
- Acquiring spatial orientation, space organisation, direction, reading maps, and grappling with mechanical processes.
- Learning musical concepts, following sports sequencing or rules, keeping track of scores or players during games such as cards and board games.
- Sequencing, following directions, reading numbers out of order, substitutions, reversals, omissions and doing operations backwards.
- Organizing detailed mathematical information, remembering specific facts or formulas for completing calculations.

Dyscalculia can be quantitative, which is a difficulty in calculating; or qualitative, which is a difficulty in conceptualizing mathematics processes; or mixed, which is the inability to integrate quantity and space.

Further definitions of and information about Dyscalculia can be found in the Additional Resources Section on page 61 and on the accompanying CD ROM.

Toolkit

Institutional Audit

The audit used in the AchieveAbility teaching and learning pilot poses three questions around identification of and support for learners with SpLD and proposes the development of a notional baseline. The outcomes of the audit, the teachers' response to the checklists and enhanced teaching practice can then become the basis for a whole institution action plan for teaching and learning drawn from practice with SpLD.

The underlying basis of this approach resides with the view that SpLD learners, who span all ability ranges, represent an intellectual loss. Low rates of formal identification, insufficient support and inappropriate teaching and learning strategies can work against learners realising their true potential. Intellectual loss is not just about learners who are 'failing'; many learners who are perceived as 'doing quite well' could be SpLD learners with the intellectual ability to achieve at a higher level but who are functioning at a lower threshold in class. By making the curriculum more accessible to those with an SpLD, these learners have a greater likelihood of success.

The Institutional Audit Questions

1. How successful is the process of identification?
2. What approaches are used to ensure that the curriculum is accessible to the needs of learners with SpLD?
3. How is SpLD awareness and information made available to managers, teachers, learners and parents?

To answer the first question, institutions make a 'guesstimate' of how many SpLD learners they might have in a target group using the DfES figure of 10% of the school population with a specific learning difference factored by a recognition that by post-GCSE, concentrations of learners with SpLD in those courses traditionally called "non-academic" and/or "second chance" education will be much more than 10%. They then compare the factored 'guesstimate' with actual and known. Most 14-19 institutions identify only a small number of learners with SpLD and many learners pass through education without their specific learning differences being identified. Data collected and disseminated about learners with SpLD is the subject of unique research undertaken by the Higher Education Academy for AchieveAbility (see www.achieveability.org.uk for more details).

Question 2 is answered following the awareness training so that the insights about underlying cognitive processes and the difficulty learners with Dyslexia, Dyspraxia and/or Dyscalculia face processing information make the question more meaningful. Institutions should consider whether curriculum accessibility is provided 'across the curriculum' and 'in class' or as a 'bolt-on extra' and reflect on the implications for the learner of these organisational factors as well as the approach to learner support adopted by the school/college. Curriculum accessibility for learners is a critical aspect of raising achievement. Managers engaged in completing the audit should also have participated in the awareness training to gain the necessary insights. The attendance at training is also an important message to teachers that managers are taking the project seriously.

Question 3 asks institutions to consider the prominence and availability of information about SpLD support and advice in publications such as their prospectus, course guides, website or any other sources of information provided for learners, teachers and other stake-holders. Identifying how and where this information is available as well as the way in which it presents SpLD will require institutions to consider access and availability of information. Similarly it will, at another level, require a reflection on the degree to which the school/college is learning focused. In other words, it asks the institution to reflect upon whether information about support for learning, learning differences/ difficulties and strategies to improve learning are sufficiently important to be given prominence. It presupposes that by engaging stakeholders in a discussion about learning for those learners who span all abilities, but find learning more difficult because of learning differences, the outcome for a school or college will be insights into improving learning for all.

Checklist for signs of SpLD

Many learners with SpLD remain unrecognised and, even where teachers suspect that a learner may have a learning difference, access to an assessment and full diagnosis may not be straightforward. The aim of the AchieveAbility Interventions Framework Checklist for Signs of SpLD is to enable teachers to feel more confident in recognising possible specific learning differences and to provide them with strategies, via the Teaching and Learning Checklist, to support effective teaching.

This checklist is drawn from a variety of recognised screening tools for identification of possible SpLD. Many of the existing lists and tools are extremely useful and further information can be found in the additional resources section (on page 61 of the publication and on the accompanying CD ROM).

Suggested use of the checklist:

Teaching staff can initially look at the first group of questions (no 1-10) applying them to the learners in their class to see if any of the descriptors seem to fit particular learners.

Following this, where an individual is identified as possibly having an SpLD, teaching staff can continue with the remainder of the checklist questions for this learner.

Even if teachers already have information about SpLD learners in the class it is advisable to use the checklist first and to then compare the results against any information received previously.

Once the checklist questions are completed ‘yes’ answers can be related to the three columns linking responses to a particular SpLD (shaded boxes indicate which difficulties indicate which SpLD).

The responses can also be compared to the information about Dyslexia, Dyspraxia and Dyscalculia within the stage 1 training and in this publication.

It may not be possible for teaching staff to complete this checklist without further observation or the opportunity to talk it through with other key staff. A professional judgement will need to be made, by teachers, about the point at which they feel information leads to a significant “at risk” conclusion about particular learners.

The checklist is not a “scientific” instrument but rather a general guide. Its purpose in the context of the AchieveAbility Interventions Framework is to help teachers identify those learners for whom the delivery of practice from the teaching and learning checklist may have the most positive impact. It may also be a helpful indicator of learners who require additional support to progress in learning and/or who could benefit from referral to an SpLD specialist.

Checklist for possible presence of a Specific Learning Difference

Are you concerned about the progress of this learner in comparison with their oral skills or ability in other areas?			
Is the learner able to explain things orally, but not in writing?			
Does the learner misinterpret social cues?			
Does the learner have difficulty with maths, maths language, and maths concepts?			
Does this learner have difficulty with fine motor skills and physical co-ordination?			
Does the learner reverse numbers?			
Does the learner have difficulty with simple calculations?			
Is the learner’s reading much more advanced than their writing?			

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Is there a marked discrepancy between intellectual potential or practical ability and the acquisition of skills? (which skills– literacy, practical and/or numeracy?)			
Is the learner able to learn information presented in one way, but not in another? For example, do they learn when presented with things visually rather than when presented orally?			
Does the learner have a short attention span and/or difficulty maintaining focus in particular subject areas?			
Does the learner seem impulsive?			
Does the learner misinterpret language and/or have poor comprehension of what is said?			
Does the learner find it difficult to memorise particular information?			
Does the learner have difficulty following a schedule, being on time, or meeting deadlines?			
Does the learner get lost undertaking a task?			
Does the learner often misread?			
Does the learner often miscopy?			
Does the learner perform similar tasks with different success rates from day to day?			
Does the learner confuse similar letters or numbers, reverse them, or confuse their order?			
Does the learner have difficulty following small print, and/or following columns?			
Does the learner have difficulty writing ideas on paper?			
Does the learner reverse or omit letters, words, or phrases when writing?			
Does the learner have difficulty completing standard forms correctly? e.g. application/enrolment forms			
Does the learner have persistent problems with sentence structure, writing mechanics, and organising written work?			
Does the learner spell the same word differently in one document?			
Does the learner have trouble using numbers?			
Does the learner have trouble remembering addresses?			
Does the learner confuse right and left, up and down?			
Does the learner have difficulty following directions, especially multiple directions?			
Does the learner appear to be poorly coordinated?			
Is the learner unable to tell you what has just been said?			
Does the learner hear sounds, words, or sentences imperfectly or incorrectly?			

Teaching and Learning Checklist

This list is intended to be used by teachers to support planning for each lesson with the designated classes in the initial roll out of the enhanced teaching practice.

The methods are described in **COLOUR A** with explanatory notes shown in italics. The elements described in **COLOUR B** were those used by all the participating teachers in each of the lessons during the teaching and learning pilot. Therefore delivery staff may find it beneficial to build up their planning from these common areas.

The teaching staff responsible for delivery should be supported by:

- Experience of the stage 1 training
- Relevant information available in the additional resources section
- Access to specialised SpLD advice
- Observation of delivery by an expert

Prior to a lesson and during planning delivery staff should ask themselves the following questions...

Have I used a suitable font (e.g. sans serif)?

Many SpLD learners find font can have a significant impact on readability see training slide 41 for info

Have I looked at the overall design to reduce clutter on visual aids, used pictures and illustrations wherever possible, boldface key words and limited the word count?

Increased readability can make materials more accessible

Have I printed handouts or materials on non-white, coloured or a selection of papers?

Coloured or off-white paper can make materials more accessible by reducing the 'glare' of black ink on white (information at <http://www.dfes.gov.uk>) Colour coding can also assist in organisation of materials.

Have I planned to start the session with a review of prior learning?

Effective learning is supported by connections being made for the learner to what is already known

Does the introduction clearly show the whole picture first?

Linking background or big picture to detail can assist learners in maintaining their focus (see DfES)

Have I identified the key learning outcomes and made these clear to the learners?

Helps learners to identify the important headline points and to relate other information to.

Where I am imparting information, is this broken into small, sequential steps?

Prevents overload of short term or working memory.

Have I ensured that the key learning outcomes will be returned to before the end of the lesson?

Links learning from the class back to the big picture.

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Have I provided an outline of schedules, goals, and lecture notes? (as a mind map or spider diagram?)

Offers a summary and visual 'route map' to the class

Have I provided sufficient opportunities to use the strengths of learners with SpLD to support the lesson aims? For example: structured discussion in small groups perhaps producing an outcome (e.g. spider diagram) to relay to the rest of the class.

Activity based and interactive learning to incorporate the strengths of all the learners in a class.

Are there opportunities to accept verbal responses to replace written work?

Is the overall presentation multi-sensory to maximize learning? (Do I need to find out more about teaching using a multi-sensory approach?)

Relying on one channel of communication can disadvantage SpLD learners. If teaching and outcomes are structured to incorporate a variety of strengths the whole group can benefit.

Have I incorporated kinetic or sensory learning experiences?

Have I made optimum use of demonstrations, observations, and experimentations within the overall planning?

Have I created opportunities to praise and commend often (-is this supported by the marking policy)?

Praise is an effective motivator for all learners. For those with SpLD the effort they often have to make to keep up with a class is rarely recognised.

How exactly have I recognised victories and accomplishments to help raise self-esteem?

Have I used approaches which teach learners to use logical thinking rather than relying on memory alone?

Many SpLD learners are able to retain more information when they understand it properly and are able to connect it to concepts in their long term memory. See the DfES 'Framework for Understanding Dyslexia' 2004 page 6.

Have I incorporated differentiation of approaches to support those learners who require adjustments?

Ideally there should be differentiation of resources, outcomes, teacher input and assessment.