



Spring Newsletter

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A note from Mark Williams MP

Thirteen years ago I decided to leave politics, temporarily as it turned out, to join the teaching profession. I enrolled on a primary PGCE course, down in Exmouth and embarked on my new career direction. It was not a decision I ever regretted, but what concerned me, as events transpired, was the inadequacies of that course. What I learnt, I learnt well, but it was what was missing that concerned me.

The Special Educational Needs component of the course, a minimal 4 sessions, based on generalities, rather than necessary specifics was a worry, and did not prepare me in any way for the challenges of my future classes.

I was aware of Dyslexia as I started my first teaching post, but in a very different context. One of my previous employers,

a Liberal Democrat Peer was profoundly dyslexic, who in no way allowed his condition to hold him back, so the challenges of dyslexia to a teaching novice were real enough. I had no strategies up my sleeve, though mercifully I did have SENCOs that knew the condition.

My first clarion call is really directed to our teacher training institutions. The laudable principles of inclusiveness mean that teacher training must become more responsive to the realities of our classrooms. Many institutions and the structure of the courses do not provide newly qualified teachers with the diagnostic tools and resources they require. There are notable exceptions, such as Bangor, who have manifestly pioneered a huge amount of materials and expertise.

There can be nothing more critical than early diagnosis, and this needs to be addressed in both the English and Welsh languages.

The announcement in the last newsletter of the Welsh Dyslexia Project/ Prosiect Dysleccia Cymru of the Dystrain e-learning course for parents and teachers is thus very welcome indeed – but the need to increase awareness has a long, long way to go. Cuts in GEST budgets have minimised opportunities for professional development in SEN. How many other teachers have notices the rapid reduction in courses available for teachers?

The greatest frustration of all however remains the statementing procedure, the delays, the excuses, the lack of resources. Early diagnosis all too often does not mean early action. All too often where diagnosis is achieved, there

is a reluctance to provide the support required, not for want of trying by teachers, but because of lack of financial resourcing by heard-pressed LEAs, in some instances forcing parents into tribunals.

I seriously raise the idea of a central SEN ring-fenced pot at a national assembly level, with independent control and assessors, to circumvent some of the unacceptable delays. The challenge is to do what the Welsh Dyslexia Project states – to make Wales the best place in the world for the dyslexic individual within three years.

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Five years on

By Dr Ian Smythe

As Prosiect Dyslecsia Cymru / Welsh Dyslexia Project (WDP) rapidly approaches its fifth anniversary, perhaps now is the time to reflect on what it has achieved since its inception. At a meeting in the Assembly in September 2000, even before the charity was officially formed, Michael Davies said he wanted to make Wales a world leader. It would be all too easy to claim it has happened, but the evidence suggests that the influence of WDP has gone well beyond the national boundaries. So rather than simply list the conferences held in Wales, the support given and the projects completed, let us consider the wider impact in places like Sweden, Spain, Poland, Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary, Austria, Hong Kong, Brazil, China, Russia, Canada and England to name just a few!

One of the earliest projects developed by WDP was a CD for parents. The idea was to use pictures and sound to allow parents to access information in every school in Wales. This meant that from the beginning WDP was making a proactive attempt to provide audio presentation of information, thus overcoming any literacy difficulties the parents may have. But WDP also wanted to extend the reach and therefore re-packaged CD slightly and put it on the web. And just to make it interesting, it was also developed in Romanian, Hungarian, Polish, Portuguese and German. And it has inspired similar projects based on the WDP format and script in Hong Kong and Sweden. The Hong Kong version was made available in every school, with staff given training on its use. It thus became an early version of the e-learning

WDP subsequently developed, and again introduced into Hong Kong. The Swedish version, also based on the WDP script, was given to parents of all children starting school in a municipality, and it will extend across Sweden later this year.

When it comes to European Projects, WDP has led some of the most innovative dyslexia project. The first was "Provision and use of ICT by dyslexic students in university in Europe". Originally designed to include just five countries (Wales, England, Sweden, Greece and Hungary), the project expanded, with the project meetings also having participants from Austria, Egypt, Japan, Poland, Spain, Bulgaria and Romania, the latter two going on to form national dyslexia associations. (Russia attended the second workshop, and subsequently the Russian Dyslexia Association was formed by very good friends. But we do not think we can claim credit for that one!)

The other major EU funded project is Dystrain, whose goal was to evaluate the difficulties of the dyslexic student in an e-learning environment. However, rather than simply have an e-learning course on say "The Rise and Fall of the Steel Industry in South Wales", we went for "Supporting the dyslexic child", which was accredited by Open College Network(Wales) at the end of 2005. This course has contributors from as far afield as Australia and Canada, and is now available in English, Welsh, Swedish, Romanian and Hungarian. This project was briefly outlined to the Department of Special Education in Brazil in February 2006 and they immediately saw its potential to teach the teachers in a country where there are few qualified to provide the specialist

training in this country of 170m people.

WDP also developed a mission statement to guide development of resources. This included policies, resources and training. This model has been used as a point of reference for many colleagues worldwide, including Hong Kong, Kuwait and Brazil, and was the only such statement of its kind in The International Book of Dyslexia which included information on 53 countries.

Along the way, WDP has also had funding for other projects which have impacted in other areas. Among these is the idea of webcam support and remote diagnosis. This was pioneered by the WDP as a proof of concept thanks to support from the Welsh Council for Voluntary Action. The work was subsequently included in the WDP project Dystrain as well the BDA-led Project Success, a project aimed to identify and support the dyslexic adolescent across Wales for which WDP is a partner. It is also being considered in Canada, where an assessor may need to make a 3 hour flight even in the same education authority.

The WDP was also responsible for adapting EdWord, a free talking word processor, which enabled it to work with the Welsh language with Welsh menus and a Welsh voice. As a by-product, it has now been adapted to provide the first such program in Brazil, again demonstrating the impact of the WDP approach to ensure wide access and support for the dyslexic individual. No doubt it will also be adapted for other languages in time, thereby helping even more dyslexics.

All in all, it is possible to reflect that WDP has made an impact

not only in Wales, but is helping change the face of support for dyslexics around the world. But this is not to say the job is done. Not until every dyslexic child is given the support they need to have the opportunity to develop to their full potential will the work of the WDP be complete. So let us celebrate not only the success of the last five years, but look forward to the innovation and developments of the next five years!

Dr Ian Smythe is an international dyslexia consultant, and his company, Ibis Creative Consultants Ltd, has managed a number of the projects mentioned above on behalf of WDP.

Intervention in secondary school – our model or ‘what works for us’

By Barbara Horsfall-Turner

Our school is a relatively large comprehensive of nearly 1,500 pupils drawing pupils from 27 primary schools in a wide rural area. It is to be expected that there would be around 150 dyslexic pupils and a further 150 with some dyslexic traits in a school of this size.

We are fortunate in having a Dyslexia Centre set up some 12 years ago with an initial grant from the county and now staffed by 4 full time dyslexia-trained teachers whose wider remit is to address literacy difficulties regardless of the cause. As such it is an umbrella for pupils with dyslexia, dyspraxia, some ASD pupils, some with MLD and so on, since the approaches used

suit most pupils who have ‘failed’ with conventional teaching of literacy. The teaching staff use a holistic approach helping pupils with problems of school work, homework, explaining their difficulties to subject teaching staff as well as addressing literacy and sometimes numeracy issues. The approach needs to be very flexible as each dyslexic pupil is an individual child.

Many pupils will need a level of support throughout their school career, although their needs often reduce but they retain a ‘drop in’ facility, some may need assessment for extra time in examinations and for some the extent of their difficulties may only become apparent when they enter the sixth form with its more demanding academic work.

More recently the establishment of a Basic Skills centre allows pupils with lesser literacy and numeracy problems to increase their skills so that they can more fully access the curriculum.

We screen all pupils on entry with reading and spelling tests following up with LASS computer generated profiles for pupils whose scores in either reading or spelling are significantly below their chronological age or show large discrepancies. Intervention is offered as appropriate with the knowledge, for instance, that a pupil may have a weak short term visual or auditory memory. The feedback from their MIDyis data, a national assessment, is also used to backup our analysis. Pupils with statements often have the provision for 5 hours of specialist teaching per fortnight, as do pupils whose literacy entitles them to Enhanced School Action Plus funding (SAP+), many of these pupils are reading or spelling at 8 years or less.

These pupils, and School Action Plus (SAP) pupils who receive an hour per week intervention, are all seen in the Dyslexia Centre. Some SAP pupils may have reading and spelling scores showing large discrepancies e.g. a reading age of 15 years but spelling of circa 10 years which is only just below their actual age.

A few School Action (SA) pupils, attend to the Dyslexia Centre for an hour a fortnight, the majority of pupils at School Action whose scores are just below chronological age are seen in the Basic Skills centre.

A school initiative has provided the opportunity to address the needs of pupils whose reading age is less than 8 years on entry through the structure of our teaching groups in year 7, with 2 ‘small’ teaching groups (2 x 16-20 pupils) having a timetabled hour a day (10 hours per fortnight) of teaching in the Dyslexia Centre, This time is spent mostly working on their reading skills so that they can access the secondary subject based curriculum. These groups are reduced to 1 ‘small’ group in years 8 and 9 with 5 hours per fortnight in the Dyslexia Centre.

The constraints that we have are present in every secondary school, namely the subject dictated timetable.

Some pupils may be exempt from a foreign language and so have intervention in those timetabled slots and older pupils (years 10 and 11) may only be studying 3 out of the 4 possible options.

We will not withdraw pupils who haven’t a timetabled slot from core curriculum lessons, we withdraw them from subjects where the loss of a lesson has the least impact, (PE lessons are

rarely used). This results in groups of mixed age ranges each working on their individual programmes. This can be beneficial as older pupils generally encourage younger pupils and are pleased to show what can be achieved!

Dyslexia Centre teaching has its emphasis on enjoyment and success in small structured steps. Pupils are taught in groups of 4 pupils each following their own individual programme of work, based Alpha to Omega and the Nussy programme, using a multisensory, structured, cumulative, phonological approach. The aim is to boost the self esteem of pupils who have 'failed' throughout their primary schooling, whilst providing them with strategies and the means to access the secondary curriculum so that they may achieve their potential. We aim to provide opportunities so that each of our pupils takes responsibility for their own learning resulting in the confidence to say 'I need more practice at this' or 'I've got this and am ready to move on'.

Over the past 12 years we have built up a large range of resources. These include many photocopiable sheets ranging from spelling practice, reading and comprehension, thinking and memory skills, following instructions etc. In practice each teacher also generates a variety of the materials to address individual needs using computer programmes such as Vocabulary Worksheet Factory, Bingo, Cardit, Phonic Clip Art, KBER Handwriting and others. We also use over 30 software programmes for direct teaching purposes, including Nussy, Lexia, Electronic Library, Reading Comprehension, SWAP primarily for decoding and comprehension skills, Nussy,

WordShark, Star Spell, I can spell plus, Spell Mate for spelling, Inspiration for mind mapping, Mastering Memory and Brain Booster for memory skills, Text Help for on-screen reading and hence writing of text, Frameworks, Word Bar for the structure of e.g. a science investigation and many more.

The use of the computer is non-threatening for the pupil since computers do not judge, provides the opportunity for 'over-learning' in a motivating and pleasant manner and also allows time to be spent with other pupils in individual teaching.

Since our emphasis is on fun we play many games, card and board, numbers of which are generated by teaching staff to address specific needs.

We do not follow a 'reading scheme' as many of these pupils have spent 6 years in primary school following such schemes which clearly have proved unsuccessful. We use a variety of approaches to teach the decoding and comprehension skills that many have failed to acquire, e.g. structured spelling and then 'books' generated by staff using these patterns together with common words, other approaches include Toe by Toe, Phonic Code Cracker, Reading Reflex. All of these approaches are backed up by age appropriate stories with low reading age from a variety of publishers.

We feel our methods have been proved to be very successful as is shown by a comparison between MIDyis data in year 7, with its GCSE predictors for individual pupils, and the grades our pupils achieve in year 11. However it is shown more fully by the obvious increase in self esteem that our pupils show as they move up through the school and by their

enthusiasm for their lessons in the Dyslexia Centre.

We have very close relationships with our parents who very quickly notice the positive changes in their children's self esteem and their rapid improvement in literacy skills.

Barbara Horsfall Turner in consultation with Sylvia Cartwright.

Dealing with Dyslexia

By Professor David Reynolds

Recent years have seen huge public discussion within education on children who have behavioural problems. There have been numerous initiatives in areas such as withdrawal units, teacher training and classroom management. Little has been done though to treat the underlying causes of such problems, which are mostly children's difficulties in learning, and media interest has been notably judgemental about these problems, blaming the children.

But more and more evidence is now accumulating to suggest that it is the untreated learning problems which cause the behaviour problems in the first place. If children fall behind, they get demoralised; they lose self-esteem and act out their frustration on their peers or on their teachers. Just dealing with the symptoms doesn't remove the underlying causes.

Chief among these learning problems is of course dyslexia; a problem which we all know involves children and adults having difficulty with reading, writing and spelling, amongst numerous other problems. Studies suggest that up to 15% of

children may have this problem to a mild degree and perhaps an additional 2 to 3% more seriously. The rates as we know are higher among boys than girls, are higher in higher social classes and the problem tends to run in families, for reasons that are probably genetic in origin.

Gone are the days when dyslexia was regarded trivially as 'middle class reading failure'. It is now seen rightly as a complex problem in its own right that has the effect of holding back mostly able children and generating low morale, frustration, failure and intense anger, to varying degrees, in treated and untreated dyslexics.

Over the last thirty years, a huge private industry has grown up that has tried to cater for these children but which has not helped them and their parents adequately. This is to be expected, because if you look at the public pronouncements the intention of the organisations involved has been to make dyslexics happy with their lot, and society tolerant of them, rather than to help by alleviating or curing their problems. Public pronouncements talk about helping dyslexics to adjust, rather than curing the problem.

The problem is that when cure has been attempted, it has rarely, if ever, been scientifically evaluated. Where are the experiments in dyslexia research about novel or existing treatments that are the normal practice in medical research?

What we do know from the inadequate research is that phonically based interventions that are the cornerstone of much help have been shown in every review of literature to have small effects, and effects that 'wash out' quickly.

Other major social and developmental problems, such as obesity, rate national headlines, national programmes, obsessive concern and governmental involvement. Dyslexia rates nothing, by comparison.

What is urgently needed, firstly, is a major national programme of research in Wales and elsewhere to see 'what works' in this area. There are treatment approaches which are based upon improving the visual perception of words and sentences. There are treatment approaches which aim at improving self-esteem, hoping to improve motivation and therefore learning. There are conventional reading based programmes, often involving one to one approaches.

There are approaches, like the one I have been associated with, which aim to improve reading through stimulating the cerebellum, the seat of the 'automaticity' which dyslexics are seen as lacking. All these programmes could be nationally evaluated, singly and in combination. Why hasn't this happened in Wales, or in other countries?

Secondly, screening systems for dyslexia exist, soon to be on-line, that can detect the incidence of dyslexic problems from about age seven. They could be nationally trialled. Why hasn't this happened?

Thirdly, organisations that work in the field, from those with a national reach in Wales and elsewhere, to the lone educational psychologist or alternative therapist, could be kite marked if they are effective and useful, to prevent anxious parents throwing money into possibly ineffective black holes. Why hasn't this happened?

Why these three essentially simple and relatively inexpensive things haven't happened in Wales or elsewhere is hard to fathom. It would not cost more than ten million pounds to do all three for the whole U.K., and a fraction of that for Wales. Ignorance of the scale of the problem, ignorance of the existence of possibly effective treatments and the passivity and impotence of the dyslexia organisations in the field are all likely explanations.

Perhaps part of the explanation for our problems in the dyslexia community is that dyslexics themselves have turned their anger inward, rather than outward upon those that have not helped them. Perhaps the complicated, multicausal nature of the dyslexic, whose problems are often multiple ones involving dyspraxia and attention deficit disorder (with or without hyperactivity), resists easy categorisation and therefore appropriate help, generates a degree of helplessness.

As the policy interventions of government in Wales and in England find it ever more difficult to impact upon educational achievements and improve children's achievements much beyond the historic levels they have already reached, it is possible that the problem is not the policies but the capacity of children to respond to them. It may be that a national Welsh drive to deal with dyslexia and other learning difficulties would not just be helpful for those children that we haven't adequately helped. It would benefit the whole of society.

David Reynolds is Professor of Education at the University of Plymouth and Emeritus Professor of Education at the University of Exeter. He has researched, with Rod Nicolson of

the University of Sheffield, the DDAT programmes of cerebellar based intervention for dyslexics and more generally in the areas of educational policy. (See <http://www.high.reliability.scho ols>)

Asesu ar waith

Mae Dr Ian Smythe, ymgynghorydd dyslecsia rhyngwladol yn darparu dealltwriaeth fer o'r broses asesu, ac amgylchiadau arbennig Cymru.

Cyflwyniad

Ysgrifennwyd llawer am asesu a'r broses asesu mewn perthynas â'r unigolyn dyslecsig. Bu ychydig ohono'n ddefnyddiol iawn, ond ni wnaeth y rhan fwyaf ohono ddim ond gwneud i bwnc syml ymddangos yn gymhleth iawn. Yr hyn yr ydych chi'n gobeithio ei wneud yma yw darparu trosolwg clir a chryno sy'n canolbwyntio ar y materion go iawn, sy'n cael eu hystyried yng nghyd-destun Cymru a naws ddwyieithog yr addysg yma.

Mae dau fath o asesiadau sydd angen i ni eu hystyried: yr asesiad "dyslecsia" a'r asesiad "anghenion".

Yr Asesiad Dyslecsia

Asesiad dyslecsia yw cadarnhad bod yr unigolyn yn ddyslecsig. Dim mwy, dim llai. Er mwyn gwneud hynny, mae'n rhaid i chi ddechrau gyda diffiniad, gan fod y diffiniad yn dweud wrthym yr hyn ddylech chi chwilio amdano. Os ydych chi'n bodloni'r meini prawf a nodir yn y diffiniad o ddyslecsia, mae'n rhaid eich bod chi'n ddyslecsig. Dyma un diffiniad o ddyslecsia:

Dyslecsia yw anhawster wrth ddysgu darllen, sillafu ac ysgrifennu'n gywir a/neu'n

rhugl, sy'n tarddu o anhawster niwrolegol.

Er mwyn cadarnhau bod yr unigolyn yn ddyslecsig, y cyfan sy'n rhaid i ni ei wneud yw profi'r hyn sydd yn y diffiniad. Y broblem yw nad yw'r rhan "dysgu" yn hawdd i'w ddangos, ac mae ymarferwyr yn aml yn dibynnu ar hanes addysgol i weld os cafodd unigolyn gyfle, ond wedi methu dysgu. Rôl yr asesydd yw penderfynu sut i fesur cywirdeb a rhuglder, yn ogystal â dehongli'r canlyniadau.

Asesiad Anghenion

Wrth asesu anghenion, mae angen deall yr hyn y mae'r plentyn yn ei wybod a'r hyn nad yw'n ei wybod, a'r hyn sydd angen iddynt ei ddysgu nesaf. Gallai hyn fod yn nhermau sgiliau llythrennedd sylfaenol, sgiliau astudio, sgiliau bysellfwrdd neu unrhyw broblem benodol sy'n peri anhawster i'r plentyn. Gellir nodi hyn drwy gymharu â phlant eraill (e.e. "Mae'r plentyn hwn flwyddyn ar ôl ei gyfoedion gyda sillafu.") Neu, efallai bod hyn ymwneud â'r hyn y mae angen iddo ddysgu nesaf. (E.e. "Mae angen iddo ymarfer ei sgiliau cyfateb llythyren-sain.")

Yr hyn sydd angen ei asesu

Bydd penderfyniad i ddarparu "asesiad dyslecsia" neu "asesiad anghenion" yn dibynnu ar amgylchiadau. Bydd yr asesiad dyslecsia yn darparu categori'n unig ac ni fydd yn dweud wrthych chi beth i'w wneud. Felly, mae cyfyngiad ar ei ddefnydd. Fodd bynnag, yn aml, mae'n rhaid i chi gael darn o bapur sy'n cadarnhau "dyslecsia" er mwyn cael mynediad i wasanaethau neu ddarpariaeth. Ond os ydych yn defnyddio'r asesiad fel sylfaen i gynllun addysg unigol, yna, mae'n rhaid i chi wybod am yr anawsterau

sylfaenol. Mae sawl math o asesiad, ond ystyrir mai'r rhai pwysicaf yw:

Gallu llythrennedd
Prosesu gwybyddol
Gwerthuso sgiliau.

Gallu llythrennedd

Rhaid dechrau unrhyw asesiad sy'n ymwneud â llythrennedd, boed yn asesiad dyslecsia neu'n asesiad anghenion, drwy asesu sgiliau llythrennedd, sef darllen, ysgrifennu a sillafu. Gall hyn gynnwys dadgodio (darllen gair unigol) yn ogystal â thasgau cymhleth fel dealltwriaeth. Bydd hyn yn dangos ar ba lefel y mae'r unigolyn yn gweithredu.

Prosesu Gwybyddol

Mae'r term hwn yn cyfeirio at brofion sy'n ceisio deall yr anawsterau sylfaenol sy'n achosi i'r plentyn fethu dysgu sgiliau llythrennedd cyn hawsed ag eraill. Mae pob prawf yn cael ei ddewis am bwrpas penodol a'i fwrriad yw mesur meysydd megis cofio synau a sgiliau odli. Fodd bynnag, mae rhai profion yn fwy defnyddiol nag eraill. Er enghraifft, nid yw deall bod gan y plentyn gof tymor byr gwael yn dweud wrthym beth sydd angen ei wneud yn y wers nesaf gan na allwch wella'r cof yn uniongyrchol. Ond rydych yn gwybod beth sy'n ei achosi, ac efallai y byddwch yn gallu datblygu strategaethau er mwyn helpu mewn meysydd eraill. Hefyd, sylwch y gall rhai sgiliau, megis odli, fod yn bwysicach yn Saesneg (a chyda'r darllenydd Cymraeg hŷn) nac gyda'r darllenydd Cymraeg iau. Felly, mae'n rhaid i bob prawf gael ei ddewis mewn perthynas â'i gyd-destun.

Gwerthuso sgiliau

Gall gwerthuso sgiliau gynnwys sawl maes, o sgiliau astudio (e.e. sut i gymryd nodiadau, sut i

baratoi ar gyfer arholiadau etc.) i sgiliau bysellfwrdd cyfrifiadurol. Mae hyn yn cydnabod bod dyslecsia'n ymwneud â sgiliau llythrennedd, ond mae'r meysydd hynny o brosesu sy'n effeithio ar lythrennedd hefyd yn effeithio ar feysydd eraill.

Yr elfen Gymreig

Mae deddfwriaeth (e.e. Cod Ymarfer AAA Cymru) wedi nodi'r angen i gael dulliau addysgu ar gyfer nodi anghenion disgyblion, gan weithio ar y cyd â gwasanaethau cefnogi addysgol eraill (e.e. Seicolegwyr Addysgol a Therapyddion Iaith a Lleferydd). Yn dilyn ymlaen o hynny, mae adroddiadau Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru yn gyson wedi cydnabod diffyg arbenigwyr yn y maes hwn, yn enwedig yn ymwneud â'r iaith Gymraeg. Mae Prosiect Dyslecsia Cymru wedi gwneud dechrau ansicr i'r broses o weithio gydag eraill i ddatblygu adnoddau priodol. Erbyn hyn, mae'n ceisio cydweithio'n ehangach i ddatblygu'r ffyrdd o nodi a chefnogi'r siaradwr Cymraeg dyslecsig cymaint ag y bo modd. Golyga hyn nid yn unig datblygu adnoddau, ond hefyd annog eu defnyddio ledled Cymru. Gan gadw hyn mewn golwg, mae'n bleser gan Brosiect Dyslecsia Cymru ddatgan ei fod newydd lansio ei gwrs Dystrain, wedi'i achredu gan Rwydwaith y Coleg Agored (Cymru). (Gweler yr erthygl ar wahân.) Ond mae'r gwaith ymhell o gael ei orffen. Mae angen datblygu rhagor o adnoddau ar gyfer asesu a chefnogaeth drwy gydweithio â phobl academaidd ac ymarferwyr yn Gymraeg ac yn Saesneg, mae angen cynnal rhagor o hyfforddiant, a chael rhagor o ymwybyddiaeth am yr holl faterion. A beth yw'r materion hynny? Dyma ddau yn unig o restr hirfaith y byddai Prosiect

Dyslecsia Cymru yn hoffi eu gweld yn cael eu datrys:

Pam y gofynnir i rai disgyblion dyslecsig symud o ysgolion cyfrwng Cymraeg i ysgolion cyfrwng Saesneg?

A yw hi'n deg ac yn briodol bod Myfyrwyr Addysg Uwch iaith gyntaf Cymraeg yn cael eu profi am Lwfans Myfyrwyr Anabl yn Saesneg?

Mae Dr Smythe yn rhedeg ei fusnes ymgynghori ei hun, ac mae wedi cynorthwyo i ddatblygu rhai o brosiectau Prosiect Dyslecsia Cymru fel ymgynghorydd.

Software supporting literacy in the inclusive classroom

Some of you who attended our Carmarthen Conference had the opportunity of having a presentation from Christine DeGraft-Hanson (Granadamedia) on their new "Track Series", which included a collection of CDRoms and workbooks. The series is designed to support acquisition of literacy from early recognition and discrimination skills to the more complex word recognition skills.

Images of front covers – Fig 1



It provides support for all learners – from the very young to those who may have specific learning difficulties in learning to read and write (including

dyslexia, dyspraxia and difficulties associated with poor attention and memory) and older learners.

The CD Roms available are:

Alphabet Track - Concentration on pairing names of letters of alphabet, and alphabetic other through games and activities that can also improve short term memory.

Spell Track – spelling strategies, visual discrimination, phoneme /grapheme correspondence.

Eye Track – concentrates on the skills of visual perception;

Phoneme Track – identify, segment blend and manipulate the sounds (phonemes) that are representative of graphemes in English language.

Word Track – reinforces the correct spelling of words in the context of sentences, proof-reading, spelling and reading of high frequency words.

Idiom Track – aims to identify and explore English idioms and their meanings – illustrating their real and literal meaning.

Number Track – practical support for pupils with specific numeracy and memory difficulties,

Whereas single user copies for schools cost £59 each, SEMERC have agreed that the software is available at home user prices of £17.01 plus VAT & P&P; for parents of pupils with SEN Statement of Need – No VAT is payable.

Those interested should contact Christine deGraft-Hanson on granadamedia.com or customer services on 0161 829 2927.

Making reading Web pages easier

Jeremy Coulter of Textic Ltd explains some background to the Textic Toolbar that aims to make web browsing easier for those with visual, perceptual or physical difficulties.

The Textic Toolbar was developed in 2005 and is currently deployed on websites including those of the British Dyslexia Association (BDA), Adult Dyslexia Centre, Patoss and Project Success here in Wales.

The origins of the toolbar were in a growing awareness of the gap that seemed to be opening up between the aspirations of many web and graphic designers and the real world requirements of the web visitor. In other words, we felt that web designers were tending to make websites more and more complicated and 'visual' whilst those of us who were trying to use them were finding it more and more difficult to find our way round them or simply to read, or understand them.

Of course, this is something of a generalization as there are many thoughtful web designers out there who are not intent simply on demonstrating their technical virtuosity or substantiating a large budget by making a website and its design more complicated than it needs to be. However, so many web designers are fresh out of college and enjoy perfect vision and faculties. They often work on large screens with perfect colour rendition and have high-speed internet connection and they sometimes forget to put themselves in the position of the end user, who may be somewhat older, may have some visual or

perceptual difficulty, and who use an old, small screen and don't necessarily enjoy the benefits of a high speed connection.

Alongside these considerations was and is the growing importance of the Disability Discrimination Act, updated in 2004 and requiring that companies do not discriminate in their provision of services to customers by means including web delivery. Under the terms of the Act, if you can't use a company's website because of the way it is designed or built you may have a legal case against the company if it can be demonstrated that the company has not made 'reasonable adjustments' to the delivery of the service. Case law will doubtless be forthcoming on this. We believe that the addition of a device such as the Textic Toolbar can be considered a 'reasonable adjustment' and one that may mean that the whole website doesn't need to be rebuilt yet.

Perhaps surprisingly, it is possible to follow increasingly promoted standards for producing an 'accessible' website, such as those published by W3C (The Worldwide Web Consortium) or advocated in the UK by BSI and the DRC (British Standards Institute and the Disability Rights Commission), yet still make the resultant website less than optimal for the end user. So, even if a website is produced with accessibility in mind, there is still likely to be a role for the Toolbar. The Toolbar can also be used on websites that are not built to accessibility standards and whilst not rendering them technically accessible, should help improve the visitor experience.

At Textic, we produced a prototype of a Toolbar that

allowed a web visitor to adjust aspects of the appearance of the web site to suit them. We developed a means to allow the font type, size and colour to be changed and likewise the background colour. We also included simple links to a thesaurus and dictionary.

Then we set out to test with various groups of users and were interested to discover that almost all of them reported that the availability of the Toolbar improved their web browsing experience. Some reported that by changing background and font colours they could quite easily read the web page content and thus didn't have to resort to printing out every page for off-line reading. Other users delighted in the fact that they no longer had to squint at tiny dancing black text on a white background, as they could easily increase the size or font type and colour and their reading speed often increased.

We received a particularly encouraging response from groups of dyslexic users and the BDA was sufficiently supportive of our work to allow us to display a BDA 'Dyslexia Friendly' tick on the Toolbar.

Even users with no difficulty, hidden or otherwise, found the Toolbar increased their enjoyment of many sites as they simply 'preferred' a certain permutation of colours.

Little of what we have done with the Toolbar is what you might call 'rocket science' as many of the adjustments that we make available via the Toolbar are already present in browsers such as Internet Explorer or Firefox. However, the fact is that most users have no idea how to make these changes via the browser's internal settings, so presenting these options to them in a

simple-to-use manner, always present on the screen, makes life easier.

We are continuing to develop the Toolbar and expect to launch a version with excellent Text to Speech reading capability later in 2006 so web pages can be read out loud and even saved as sound files for later listening. We have produced a version for Microsoft Word documents and are developing further versions for use on other document types.

There are three basic versions of the web Toolbar: first, the personal version as a simple download to install on a PC which will work on most visited websites; secondly, an 'overlay' version for use by third party website owners, and thirdly, a fully embedded version which operates on website built and managed with the Textic content management system.

You can try the personal download version of the web Toolbar by downloading a 30-day trial version from www.textic.com. We are about to start the development of a version in Welsh language and we anticipate this being available before the end of May.

A new approach to handwriting

Designed for more comfortable and strain-free writing, the Yoropen has proved to be highly effective in changing the way we look at pens. Reducing writing strain, encouraging improved posture and a correct grip, this unique ergonomic pen has gained a large following from hand writing experts, left-handers and special needs teachers across the UK.

The main benefit for left-handed writers seems to be associated with the increased field of view that the raised head allows. The angle of the nib encourages more evenly spaced wording and less smudging, preventing the common 'hook' method of writing that left-handers often adopt from an early age.

For those who experience difficulty in reading, spelling and hand writing, the pen has helped with regard to spatial awareness, spacing between one word and another, grip, pressure, angle and size. Dyslexic individuals have told us of how much easier this pen is to control with its adjustable rubber grip and hand writing experts have recognised it as a valuable teaching resource.

Among the awards that the Yoropen has won include the prestigious gold medal at the Geneva International Awards 2002 and first prize at the ISPA innovation product for the year award in Frankfurt 2004. Since its development, the range has grown to include the Mini-Yoropencil - ideal for kids learning to write correctly – and the aluminium, refillable executive Yoropen. This range will continue to grow as the pen's popularity increases and Coles Pen Company are currently in the process of developing a new plastic refillable Yoropen.

It is fair to say that the Yoropen is at the forefront of a new approach to handwriting and is quickly making writing an altogether more enjoyable and comfortable experience.

If you would like any further information about the Yoropen please log on to our website www.penheaven.co.uk.

BT National Award – press release

Prosiect Dyslecsia Cymru, based in Llechryd, Ceredigion, is one of the seven National Award winners. It is a registered charity which creates an environment where those who suffer from dyslexia can develop to their full potential.

The group brings together professionals working within the dyslexia community, the commercial sector and government agencies, as well as parents and carers, to develop awareness, understanding and resources for the support of dyslexic individuals. As a winner of an e-effective Connection Award in February 2005 the group received one year's connection to BT Business Broadband and a digital camera, enabling staff to upload information onto its website faster and include photos for its newsletters to send to the local media.

Mr Michael Davies, a trustee as well as being treasurer of Prosiect Dyslecsia Cymru, said: *"Our overall aim is to create a level playing field in the community, both at school and in the working environment, to ensure that every dyslexic individual in Wales is given the best opportunity to demonstrate their potential. We chose to apply for the Website Accessibility Solutions Package because it's vital our website reflects and facilitates this aim, and in order to do this we need to update it in terms of content, layout and manageability. We want to provide easy access to materials such as teaching resources for children at school and adults in higher education. It also needs to provide up-to-date*

information and advice, for instance about the latest medical research, new government reports, or even regarding what funding is available to assist sufferers. Most importantly, being based in Wales, all this information needs to be bilingual to serve everyone.

“We’re delighted to have received this award because the expertise, skill and time given by BT will enable us to realise this vision and design a modern and easily accessible website, which will be a tremendous long-term resource and support to all those affected by dyslexia. A small charity like ours would never usually have access to specialist advice such as this and it will make a very real difference to the quality and longevity of our website facility.”

Overcoming barriers to learning in Mathematics

Accredited Professional Certificate in In-service Education

18 & 19 May, 6 July & 28 September 2006

This course offers high quality presentations and materials, distance learning techniques and support for individual school-based developments. Designed by the authors of the best selling *Working with Dyscalculia*, it combines tried and tested methods with the latest research to give course members practical solutions for improving their pupil's numeracy skills. The certificate course is also open to part time and non-accredited participants.

Course overview

Day 1: Recognising barriers to learning

- Current thinking about learning difficulties in Maths
- Thinking and learning styles in Maths
- Dyslexia and Dyscalculia

Presenters:

Steve Chinn and Fil Came

Day 2: Assessing Individual Needs

- Effective learning in Mathematics
- Numicon
- Research developments

Presenters:

Romey Tomey (Numicon)
Claire Trott (Loughborough University)

Day 3: Classroom Strategies

- Separate practical sessions for primary and secondary colleagues
- Wave three approaches
- Assessment

Presenters:

Noel Graham (Claire Publications)
Louise Buck (Oldham LEA)

Day 4: Meeting Individual Needs

- Anxiety, self-esteem and Maths phobia
- Language of Maths and Using ICT
- Case studies
- IEPs and target setting

Presenters:

Anne Henderson and Fil Came

Venue:

University of Worcester, Worcester

Lead Tutor:

Fil Came

What you gain from the course:

- National and international presenters
- Comprehensive course notes and CDs with practical resources and software materials
- Email, on-line course forum and telephone contact
- Networking and support for school-based projects
- Individual module awards 15 CAT points
- Certificate in In-service Education on completion of both modules

What the university's quality assurance report said about the course:

Students were very complimentary about the lead tutors, commenting upon their expertise. They were particularly pleased with the time given for 'networking'. Practical sessions provided a bank of materials and ideas for classroom practice. The quality of supporting speakers was rated as 'excellent'.



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Raising Standards in Maths Working with Dyscalculia

ISBN 0-9531-0552-0

Authors: Anne Henderson, Fil Came, Melanie Brough

Over 134 Pages
A4 and wired bound

This is a book jam-packed with practical ideas and strategies to help teachers recognise Dyscalculia and overcome barriers to learning in Maths.

- Training resources to help raise awareness and understanding of Dyscalculia and learning difficulties in Maths
- Information and definitions for Dyscalculia
- Advice and checklists for assessing students with difficulties in mathematics
- Practical strategies and resources to meet Specific Difficulties in Maths
- Suggestions for ICT software materials
- Handout masters for in-house training sessions

"This book is a valuable resource. Every school should have a copy and all primary teachers, mathematics teachers and learning support staff should be encouraged to reflect on what it has to offer."

Association for Teachers of Mathematics
(www.atm.org.uk/reviews/books/workingwithdyscalculia.htm)

"This is a quality publication. The abundance of practical suggestions with 42 pages of photocopiable sheets will ensure this book is eagerly snapped up by teachers. Additionally the quality and presentation of the content and the expertise and experience of the authors make this a one-off, and a welcome resource to this neglected and perhaps misunderstood area."

Dr.Gavin Reid
Senior Lecturer, Educational Studies,
University of Edinburgh



Booking/Order Form

More information about course venues, online booking and ordering is available at www.learning-works.org.uk

1. Overcoming barriers to learning in Mathematics

Dates: 18 & 19 May, 6 July, 28 September

Venue: University College of Worcester, Worcester

Course Fees: £600 plus VAT (£105) Module 1 + a University fee of £50.00

I want to book place(s) for the above course

I enclose a £100 deposit (cheque made payable to Learning Works)

Contact the office if you wish to attend part time or as a non-accredited course member.

Cancellations

Full refunds can only be made if cancellation is made no later than three weeks before events otherwise a 50% charge will be incurred. If cancellations are made less than seven days before an event then no refunds can be made.



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2. Teaching and Training Resources

Please send me (tick box):

<input type="checkbox"/>	Working with Dyscalculia book(s) at £25 each	£ <input type="text"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Set(s) of posters at £7.50 each	£ <input type="text"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Set(s) of book and posters at £30 each	£ <input type="text"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Plus 10% p&p	£ <input type="text"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	I enclose a cheque (payable to Learning Works) for	£ <input type="text"/>

Or, please invoice me (tick box)

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School

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Please return to: Dominique Came, Learning Works®, FREEPOST (SCE 11716), 9 Barrow Close, Marlborough, Wiltshire, SN8 2YY. Tel: +44 (0) 1672 512914 Fax: +44 (0) 1672 519025 E-mail: info@learning-works.org.uk

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I am interested in hearing more about dyslexia for the following reasons

- I think I may be dyslexic
- A young member of my family may be dyslexic
- An adult member of my family may have dyslexia
- I have a professional interest regarding dyslexia
- I am interested in issues relating to dyslexia and the Education System
- I am interested in issues relating to dyslexia and employment
- I am interested in Support for Families coping with dyslexia

Please tick the nature of your interest

- Parent or guardian
- Family member
- Special Educational Needs
- Educational Psychologist
- Speech & Language
- SENCo
- Other (please state)

<p>If you would like to contribute an article in any of our future newsletters, please contact Miss C Owens, Administrator, at llechryd1@btconnect.com</p>
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