



Inclusivity in literacy education; a kinaesthetic approach to increasing overall class performance in Literacy KSI/2

White Paper

In association with

Signature
excellence in communication
with deaf people

Inclusivity within literacy education

We all understand that establishing the foundations for literacy skills at an early age is of utmost importance in order to prepare people for adulthood.

Special education law requires that students be placed in the least restrictive environment appropriate or practical. This has led to placement of many students with disabilities in regular education classrooms. This process is called "inclusion" and results in unique challenges for educators. The students consist of regular education students and special education students who are taught together. At times, the classroom will break into groups for small group instruction and other times they are taught together.

Looking in an inclusive classroom may appear to be the same as any, but there are some significant differences. Typically the inclusion classroom has two teachers, a regular and a special education teacher who collaborate. Some inclusive classrooms will have a regular education teacher and a special education assistant.

An effective teacher can offer material that is challenging for all students, while meeting the needs of those who learn differently.

This is not accomplished by teaching all students the same, but by teaching at each child's level. However studies suggest there is a strong affinity with mainstream learning and reading hour appears in many schools to be similar to mainstream classes.

According to a report by Penny Lacey, a senior lecturer at the University of Birmingham; 'Teaching with emphasis exclusively on phonics and synthetic phonics is unlikely to be suitable for many children with SLD and it may obscure the importance of teaching in alternative media.'

This paper explores how the use of sign language can support inclusive strategies and deliver tangible results.

Which current methods encourage literacy inclusivity?

One of the challenges for inclusive education is making sure classroom teachers have the support they need to work with children with specific educational needs. In order to do that the role of resource teachers may need to change.

Several papers outline strategies for better engaging children with learning disabilities in literacy based learning. These include Kinaesthetic learning, drama and play, and abstract initiatives around use of photo, images and symbols, as well as traditional orthography and conventional literacy.



'Kinesics' refers to all body movements and it has long been recognised that nonverbal communication, and Kinaesthetic learning approaches can benefit all students, not just so-called kinaesthetic learners, when these approaches help to add another dimension to their overall learning capability.

Kinaesthetic learners prefer to learn by doing, by moving around and through hands on learning.

Research from neuro-science seems to suggest that movement encourages the brain to process information more effectively so even for those students who are not predominantly 'hands on' learners, learning activities that involve some movement may enhance the learning experience of all learners.

Further compliance with changing demands such as revised teaching standards, and the curriculum for English, which includes a strong emphasis on use of systematic synthetic phonics create additional pressures.



'It's just as important to remember that a major element in successful learning is enjoyment and fun, and most students find at least some kinaesthetic learning activities enjoyable and fun.'

The use of visual imagery and pictures is also seen to have a positive effect with emergent readers. Jalongo et al, (2002) study suggests that wordless books are a powerful influence on emergent readers and Evans and Saint-Aubin (2005) show how pictures totally capture the attention of very young children being read to by their parents. One skill that is specifically taught to emergent readers is the ability to extract meaning from illustrations to help them make sense of text.

This innately suggests there may be a benefit to applying sign language in an inclusive environment. A language learning process that combines kinaesthetics, imagery and application of abstract symbols.

Ernst Thoutenhoofd of the University of Edinburgh, suggests social interplay offers a symbiotic arrangement – one in which language mediation of an expressly certified quality lends credibility to the social efficacy of educational inclusion. Moreover, this symbiosis appears as an effective and positive response to legislation, in particular in relation to disability discrimination acts.

Further, developments in digital communication mean ICT can be applied to successfully supported literacy and raise standards using aspects of this rationale.

How can SignSpell help?

SignSpell helps readers across ages and attainment levels to develop their literacy skills.

All of the SignSpell resources encourage physical expression of words and reinforce Learning through visual and kinaesthetic association - enhancing vocabulary and spelling. Children learn new strategies to help communication skills, use of language, spelling and remembering words.

SignSpell complements phonics by aiding memory and stimulating channels of communication that spoken language does not fulfil. Where phonics will help children to pronounce and read words, SignSpell will help them associate a word with a sign, movement and meaning.

The UKLA (2010) review on teaching reading provided evidence that classrooms where children are taught to read most effectively show an approach in which word recognition skills are matched by attention to comprehension.

'SignSpell is a multi-purpose resource and can be adapted to help accelerate many areas of learning. I have found it works successfully as a spelling strategy especially for lower ability students.'

Kinaesthetic components within teaching have always been successful; the more links a child can make to a new piece of information the easier it is to remember. SignSpell is no exception to this rule and Miss Maycock has found it helps within areas of literacy.

Nicola Maycock, Year 5, The Wainfleet Magdalen School



'As tools to "extend communication skills through the use of British Sign Language" SignSpell had a powerful impact on the intended age range who were motivated, engaged and fascinated by the concept of "another language" and wanted to learn more.'

EDS, the Learning Organisation

SignSpell as a solution

While British Sign Language can integrate easily into most reading programmes, the challenge remains that teachers are often too busy and have limited resources to either undertake additional study, or to build Sign Language into their classroom curriculum.

Reading is an acquired skill that requires a planned sequence of skill development and any solution needs to be effectively designed around teachers needs.

Signature is a nationally recognised body which promotes excellence in communication with deaf and deaf blind people. The organisation has sponsored development of SignSpell with specialist educational practitioners to encourage inclusive learning and in recognition of the weight of evidence demonstrating enhanced results in literacy.

SignSpell is a series of educational resources to develop communication and literacy skills in children aged 4-11. By teaching simple British Sign Language (BSL), SignSpell encourages children to enjoy reading and develop their language and literacy skills. It's a unique and exciting learning strategy with straightforward resources that teachers can trust.

'SignSpell is a very interesting approach. Signing / fingerspelling make sharing stories with an adult a more active experience, which fits in well with this age group.'

'In addition, it extends their understanding of communication and gives them another route to remembering how to read and spell words.'

Dr Rona Tutt OBE

The SignSpell system includes 52 lesson plans, 12 themed storybooks, 140 additional fun activities, flashcards and an online video dictionary with 340 BSL signs and phrases to support learning.

No prior experience of British Sign Language is required to teach SignSpell. Children and adults can learn together.

- A range of materials to suit different teaching styles e.g. books and online/ big or small groups
- Online materials can be used on a computer or tablet
- Differentiation is the key factor in inclusion within the classroom



Further Reading:

- <http://www.schoolpsychologistfiles.com/2008/11/the-benefits-of-an-inclusion-classroom.html>
- <https://www.atpe.org/protection/YourStudentsAndParents/incUnderstand.asp>
- <http://www.csie.org.uk/inclusion/what.shtml>
- http://www.literacytrust.org.uk/policy/nlt_policy/literacy_and_social_inclusion
- <http://www.literacytrust.org.uk/news/3543>
- http://www.ukla.org/publications/view/literacy_and_social_inclusion_closing_the_gap/
- <http://www.teachingtimes.com/articles/literacy-digital-communication.htm>
- <http://www.suttontrust.com/research/summary-what-prospects-for-mobility-in-the-uk/>
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