

Literacy – North Lanarkshire Council

The Scottish Government's Literacy Action Plan signals its commitment to a heightened, more targeted focus for improving literacy skills in Scotland. The overarching vision is to raise standards of literacy for all from the early years to adulthood. To that end, the following questionnaire is aiming to gather information on local authority activity in line with the actions contained within the plan.

Can you please give details of your current policy/policies to improve literacy?

Birth to secondary

North Lanarkshire Council places the highest priority on the development of literacy skills for all children. In 2000 the Council established a Literacy Base as a 'hub' to develop a Literacy Strategy and to act as a centre of excellence for language development and staff training and development. This base is managed by a Quality Improvement Officer and has a team of development officers and intervention teachers. Literacy Base staff work closely with Psychological Services and schools to deliver, implement and evaluate the Literacy Strategy.

The North Lanarkshire Active Literacy strategy was launched in 2007. The aim of the strategy is to raise attainment in literacy for all children through:

- A high quality evidence-based literacy programmes written in North Lanarkshire Council for P.1-7 (Early Years and Secondary under development).
- A specific strategy for children with literacy difficulties i.e. 'Supporting Children with Literacy Difficulties' which runs in parallel with North Lanarkshire's 'Support for Learning Strategy'.
- An extensive staff development programme focusing on the most effective ways to teach literacy to all children including those with literacy difficulties.
- In-school support for class teachers to implement intervention programmes.

The Active Literacy strategy has been closely monitored and evaluated. Dramatic improvements in literacy have been evident for all children, and in particular, those with literacy difficulties (see later section for further details).

Adult Literacy

In relation to adult literacy North Lanarkshire has developed and is implementing *North Lanarkshire Community Learning & Development Partnership – Adult Literacy & Numeracy Strategy*.

The Adult Literacy and Numeracy Plan will:

- Ensure a coordinated approach to the delivery of literacy, numeracy and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) that supports local access within North Lanarkshire.
- Build the capacity of partners to assess and evidence the progression of literacy, numeracy and ESOL learners
- Support coordinated training to improve quality in relation to the delivery of national strategies.

- Raise awareness of the current context for Literacies and challenge the stigma associated with those seeking support.
- Support partners to identify targeted areas where Literacy, Numeracy and ESOL delivery would be beneficial and avoid duplication of services.

Please detail particular areas (if any) you are focussing activity on, and why? (ie Early Years, Adult literacies.)

The Active Literacy Strategy is targeting primary 1 to 7 pupils but development work is underway and the approach will be extending into Early Years and Secondary.

The Quality Improvement Service offer on-going support to the Early Years Sector. Examples of recent work include training on the implementation of the Birth to Three document which focuses on developing literacy through the senses.

Please give a short description of the approaches you have adopted to raise literacy standards.

The Active Literacy Strategy is an approach underpinned by evidence-based research (e.g. Block and Pressley, 2007, Johnston and Watson, 2004, National Reading Panel, 2000). It focuses on the integration of reading, writing, talking and listening. Active Literacy affects:

- ***The content of the curriculum*** (e.g. It is an integrated literacy approach which avoids teaching in decontextualised units. The content of the curriculum changes as children move through school and their literacy skills become more sophisticated. For example, North Lanarkshire has developed a format for developing higher order comprehension skills in primary 4-7 (secondary 1 and 2 is presently being developed). This comprehension framework is designed to dovetail with the NLC writing framework and the development of talking and listening. Literacy is also developed across the curriculum (e.g. through environmental studies and expressive arts.) At the earlier primary stages a structured phonics and spelling programme is implemented which link reading and writing.
- ***Teaching methodology*** (e.g. Effective use of teacher strategies i.e. think aloud, reciprocal teaching, direct instruction).
- ***Children's learning experiences*** (e.g. Fewer passive, low level tasks. Activities are challenging and children are encouraged to be cognitively and physically active).

Within the strategy there are clear mechanisms for identifying and supporting children with literacy difficulties.

Adult Literacy

A number of approaches are adopted within the *North Lanarkshire Community Learning & Development Partnership – Adult Literacy & Numeracy Strategy*. There are initiatives to:

- Ensure that learners' goals are of prime importance and that clear progression routes are evidenced.
- Increase learners' and referrers' awareness of ALN provision.
- Develop and implement a training programme that addresses the needs of all partners.
- Enable learners to be actively involved in the monitoring of the current strategy and the development of future strategies.

Please describe how you have worked with external partners to achieve your aims. (ie Educational Psychologists, Community Learning links, Parental involvement, schools cluster working.)

Psychological Service is part of the team which plans, implements and evaluates the Active Literacy Strategy. The strategy has developed in consultation with Speech and Language Therapy and North Lanarkshire Parent Council).

Adult Literacy

All partners below have supported the CLD section in the development of the Adult Literacy and Numeracy Strategy (e.g. Routes to Work, Motherwell, Coatbridge and Cumbernauld Colleges, NHS, Addiewell Prison, Housing and Social Work, Library Service & LEAD Scotland, VANL).

Please describe how you have ensured the skills and knowledge of practitioners (ie teachers, volunteers, nursery assistants) are current and developed. What CPD opportunities have you provided?

North Lanarkshire Council has an extensive staff development programme to support the teaching of literacy.

Teacher resources

A range of teacher resources have been developed to ensure staff have access to evidence-based, effective strategies (e.g. Active Literacy Stage 1, Active Literacy Stage 2, Supporting Children with Literacy Difficulties, Early and First Level).

Training

A range of training is offered to staff, for example in 2009/10, 2,388 staff received training. This includes input on:

- Active Literacy - teaching reading comprehension, phonics, spelling and writing in primary 1 – 7.

- Active Literacy – supporting children with literacy difficulties.
- Developing literacy through interdisciplinary work.
- The role of Early Years Workers in the development of literacy skills
- Monitoring and tracking literacy – the role of the Head Teacher
- Training on specific external interventions for literacy difficulties e.g. ‘Better Reading’, ‘Wave Three’
- Birth to Three
- Dyslexia

In-school support

The Literacy Base works closely with schools following an HMIE Inspection and North Lanarkshire’s internal ‘School Improvement Visits’ to help improve the school’s delivery of literacy.

Literacy Tutors work alongside class teachers, class room assistants and learning support teachers to model good practice and provide a consultancy service.

Educational Psychologists offer training, consultancy and assessment at a school level (in addition to Authority work) in the area of literacy.

Adult Literacy

Over the last three years the Community Learning & Development partnership has provided CPD opportunities for all partners, this has taken the form of a series of PDAs in Introduction to Tutoring ESOL (ITESOL) and Initial Training in Adult Literacies Learning (ITALL). In total 30 staff have undertaken ITALL training with 12 completing ESOL training. Plans have been put in place to offer both PDAs in February of this year in partnership with South Lanarkshire Council. The following training courses have also been made available to partnership staff Introduction to Specific Learning Difficulties in Adults (18 staff), Visual Processing Awareness (14 staff) and Dyslexia Awareness (14 staff).

The CLD section of Learning & Leisure services has also delivered Initial Training in Adult Literacies Learning (ITALL) to 33 volunteers over this period with ongoing training planned for 2012/13 and 2013/14

Please give details of how you are evaluating current practices.

Evaluation

The Active Literacy Strategy is closely evaluated. The research strand of the study has followed four groups of children over the first six years of the intervention. Within each group experimental and comparison children were randomly selected. The oldest group is now in primary seven. 83 primary schools have been involved in the study.

Results

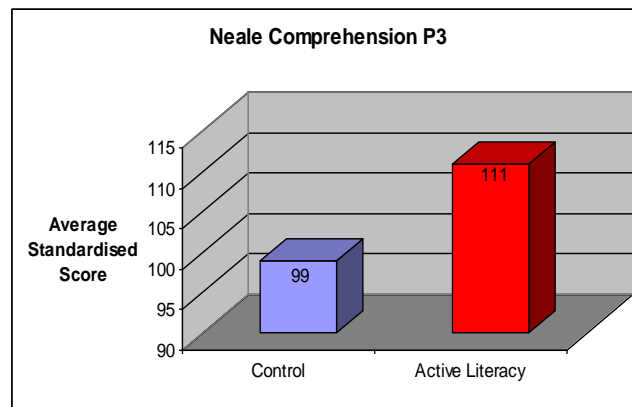
Results from the 6th year of the project (2011) have been extremely encouraging.

Primary 1 to 4

This year phase 1-4 data from the last four years has been combined to investigate the overall impact of Active Literacy. This involves data from over 1000 children. In primary 1 and 2 the Active Literacy children have outperformed the comparisons when assessed on a measure of text reading (Reading Now, GL Assessment and Learning). For example, in primary 2 Active Literacy children have an average standardised score of 102 compared with 92 for the comparison group.

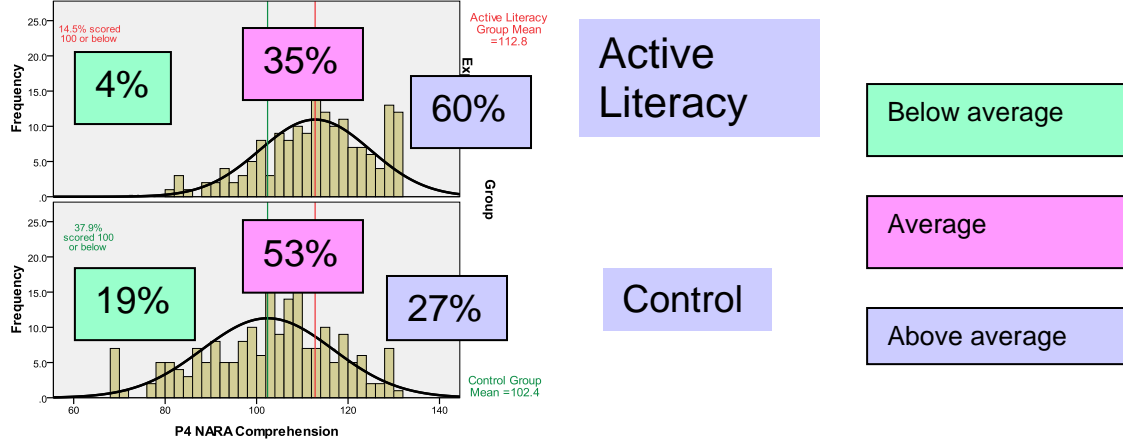
In primary 3 and 4 when considering scores on the comprehension section of the Neale Analysis of Reading Ability (GL Assessment and Learning) a similar pattern is evident. Active Literacy children have higher comprehension scores e.g. P3 Active Literacy average standardised score is 111 vs. comparison score of 99 (see figure 1 below); Active Literacy P4 112 vs. comparison P4 102).

Figure 1: Reading Comprehension scores of Active Literacy compared with control group (children not involved in the intervention) at primary three.



What is also interesting is that the number of children scoring within the 'below average range' is reducing e.g. in P4 it has dropped from 19% to 4% (see figure 2). Meanwhile, the number of children scoring within the 'above average' range has increased e.g. in P4 60% of the Active Literacy Group compared with 27% of the comparison group.

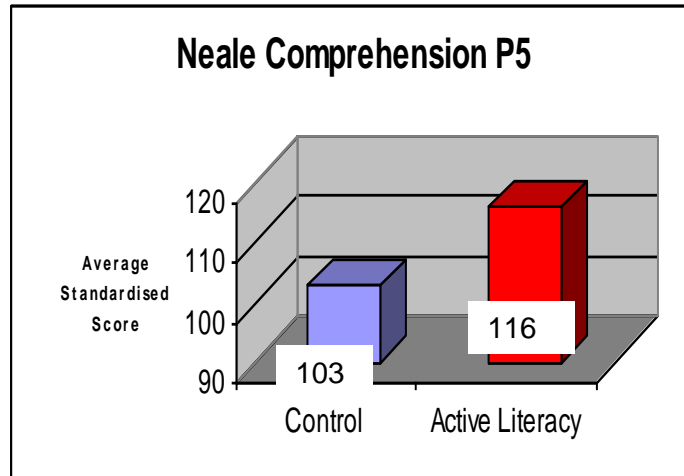
Figure 2: percentages of children scoring in 'below average', 'average' and 'above average' range



Primary 5 to 6

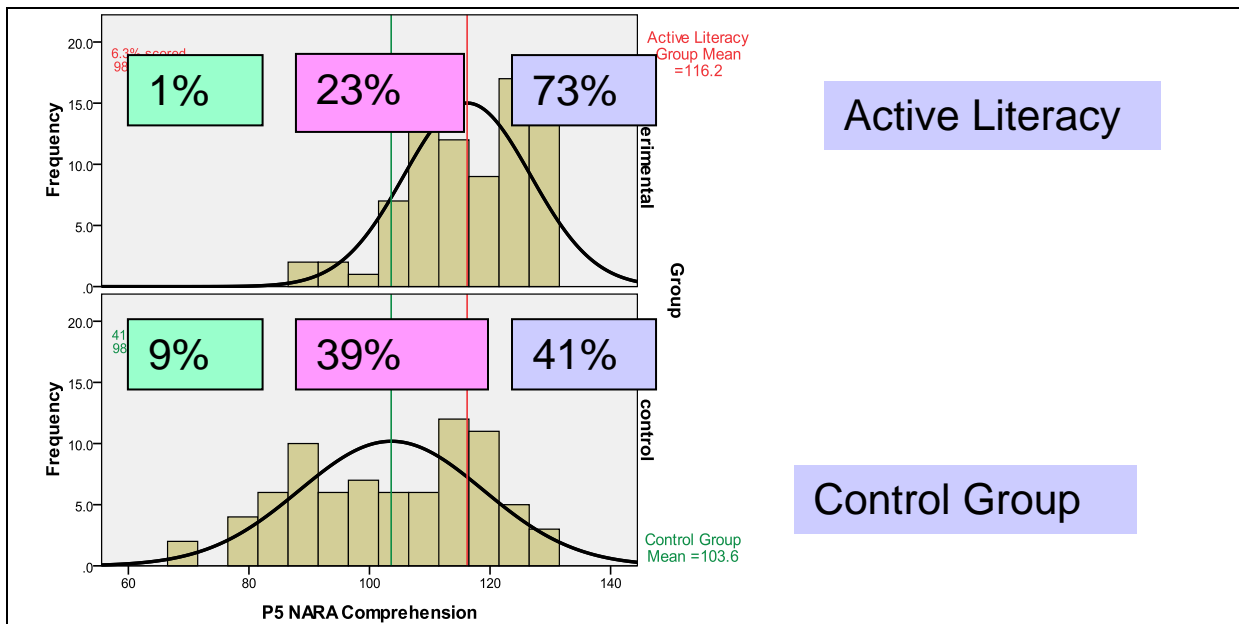
In primary 5 and 6, statistically significant results between the Active Literacy group and the comparison group continues. Results mirror those at the P3 (see figure 3) and P4. In both stages the average mean score for the Active Literacy group falls within the ‘above average’ range.

Figure 3: Reading Comprehension scores of Active Literacy compared with control group (children not involved in the intervention) at primary three.



By primary 5 only 1% of the sample fell into the ‘below average’ range (see figure 4). While the sample size is smaller for this group (n=200), the results are promising and suggest that gains can be sustained into later primary. Schools are presently piloting the P.6/7 programme.

Figure 4: Percentages of children scoring in ‘below average’, ‘average’ and ‘above average’ range in primary 5.



Active Literacy

Control Group

Adult Literacy

North Lanarkshire Community Learning & Development Partnership – Adult Literacy & Numeracy Strategy and the subsequent action plan that will be developed to deliver the strategy will be monitored by the CLD partnerships Adult Literacy & Numeracy Sub Group. The subgroup in partnership with learners will undertake monitoring of provision on an ongoing basis. The monitoring process will utilise HMIe ‘How Good is your Community Learning & Development’ as a key tool to evaluate the delivery of the service within the partnership.

The delivery of ALN provision at a local level will be monitored via individual learning plans, group learning plans and the use of the curriculum wheel.

Any additional comments.

North Lanarkshire has a proven track record of literacy development which has had a significant impact on improving outcomes for all learners. A very strong emphasis has been placed on eradicating illiteracy to enable all of our citizens to fully participate in the life and work of the community and to contribute to the economic vibrancy of North Lanarkshire and beyond