

# CABHAIR

The Newsletter of the Special Education Support Service (SESS)

ISSUE 2 | January 2008

## CONTENTS

PUBLICATION OF "POST-PRIMARY GUIDELINES"	PG2
THE SPECIAL SCHOOL AS A RESOURCE	PG3
TECHNOLOGY: FOCUS ON SPECIAL NEEDS	PG4
LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT FOR DEAF STUDENTS	PG4
CROSS-BORDER PROFESSIONAL EXCHANGE PROGRAMME (2004-2006)	PG5
"IN SKUL I LERN 2 SPEL VERY DEY"	PG6
BRIDGING THE GAP BETWEEN PRIMARY AND POST-PRIMARY SCHOOL	PG9
DIFFERENTIATION: TRANSFORMING LEARNING FOR TEACHERS AND STUDENTS	PG10
SPOTLIGHT	PG11
THE LETTER 'B': TERMINOLOGY IN SPECIAL EDUCATION	PG12

## EDITORIAL COMMITTEE

Sean O'Leary (Editor), Assistant National Co-ordinator SESS  
Joan Crowley O'Sullivan, National Co-ordinator, SESS  
Emer Ring, Divisional Inspector, Department of Education and Science



## WELCOME

Welcome once more to the newsletter of the Special Education Support Service. The SESS was set up as part of a three pronged strategy to train and support teachers of students with special educational needs. Teacher Education Section (TES) has sought to provide for teachers by expanding post-graduate professional training programmes, developing more intensive induction programmes and targeted training, and providing for continuing professional development through the SESS.

In the past four years TES and the Department of Education and Science have sought to provide every resource to the SESS in meeting the needs of teachers. With these resources the SESS has achieved a huge amount in providing support for teachers of students with a range of special needs. Joan and her team have provided training to 15000 teachers in 2006 with teachers receiving training in areas such as ASD, challenging behaviour and dyslexia amongst others. Thanks to the work of the SESS, teachers are now better equipped than ever before to deal with the needs of these students.

TES will continue to support the SESS in its excellent work so that both the TES and SESS can ensure that students have the maximum possible opportunity to fulfil their own potential within the education system and in society at large.

Alan Wall  
Principal Officer  
Teacher Education Section

## INTRODUCTION

The School of the Divine Child in Ballintemple, Cork, is a school catering for students with physical disabilities. Recently, I had occasion to visit the school. As I sat at a computer, watched by Pat, a seventeen-year old student, I accessed a computer programme using assistive technology, the operation of which was dependent upon my head movements. When Pat saw my high scores on the screen and noted my success with the programme, he beamed across at me and with great enthusiasm exclaimed, 'Great score, Joan! This is cool- when do I get to have a go!'

For me, in that brief moment the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act (2004) became a reality. The thrust of the legislation is about providing students with special educational needs with 'access to' together with ensuring 'participation in' and 'benefit from an appropriate education'.

The role of the teacher and his/her repertoire of skills in facilitating and guiding the learning environment are central. The teacher's professional expertise enables him or her to interpret the needs of the student and the requirements of the curriculum in order to provide the learning experience for the student. For this particular student the technology, facilitated by the teacher, was the conduit which would not just enable the 'access' but ensure 'participation in' and would almost certainly guarantee 'benefit from an appropriate education' for Pat.

In a time of great change for all teachers working with students with special educational needs teachers continue to engage in a process of continuing professional development, reflection and renewal. Increasing numbers of teachers are availing of SESS support and participating in SESS events. The brief of the SESS is to continue to support all teachers to enhance the quality of teaching and learning in the creation of pathways to enable students, like Pat, all over the country 'to have a go'.

Best wishes,

*Joan Crowley O'Sullivan*  
Joan Crowley O'Sullivan  
National Co-ordinator  
SESS





## PUBLICATION OF “POST-PRIMARY GUIDELINES”

*Tom Daly, Assistant National Co-ordinator, SESS. Tom is seconded from Boherbue Comprehensive School, Boherbue, Mallow, Co. Cork.*

A significant landmark in the development of educational provision for students with special educational needs occurred in June when new guidelines on promoting inclusion in post-primary schools were published by the Inspectorate of the Department of Education and Science.

The document, entitled *Inclusion of Students with Special Educational Needs: Post-Primary Guidelines*, initially summarises the social, policy and legislative developments which inform the access to appropriate, meaningful and quality education for students with special educational needs. The guidelines are pragmatic in acknowledging the challenges posed to all teachers and schools in meeting the needs of students with special educational needs. Amongst these, for example, are the requirement to provide a subject-centred curriculum, the preparation of students for state examinations, the “points race”, and the fact that teachers at post-primary level may teach a range of class groups.

Taking cognisance of these realities, the guidelines offer a comprehensive road-map for schools in their development of policy, organisation and practice in relation to the inclusion of students with special educational needs. The issues addressed in the document range from policy development and staff organisation, to specific planning for individual students.

There is also a comprehensive section concerned with effecting learning and teaching in the inclusive school. The guidelines allow for and promote flexibility of approach in accordance with individual schools’ contexts. As the Minister for Education and Science, Mary Hanafin TD, stated in her press-release accompanying the publication of the guidelines, “They are presented as good-practice advice and not as a set of prescriptions”.

It is clear that schools and teachers will require support in their ongoing efforts to meet the challenge of inclusion. The SESS will play a significant role in that response. As one of the bodies which provided input during the compilation of the Guidelines, we will be constantly seeking to refine and develop our range of supports in order to help schools achieve the aspirations set out in the document.

We are very much looking forward to this ongoing work with teachers and schools, with the ultimate aim of supporting the learning of students with special educational needs in inclusive school environments.



*“The guidelines offer a comprehensive road-map for schools in the development of policy, organisation and practice.”*



# THE SPECIAL SCHOOL AS A RESOURCE

*Ita Teegan, Project Manager, SESS. Ita is seconded from Scoil Bernadette, Montenotte, Cork, where she worked as the Leaving Certificate Co-ordinator.*

*“A framework has been designed to enable meaningful and professional exchange to take place.”*

## Introduction

The work of special schools has been acknowledged within the education system for many years. The Report of the Special Education Review Committee (1993) advised that linkages should be established between special and mainstream schools and suggested that both parallel systems become involved in shared projects, thus enabling schools within a geographical area to liaise professionally in a collaborative and co-operative fashion. The SESS has established a project *The Special School as a Resource* in collaboration with Scoil Bernadette in Cork.

## The Project

The challenge facing the project at the outset was how best to develop ways to facilitate the sharing of expertise between mainstream and special schools. As defined by Collins' dictionary, a 'resource' is a supply or source of support. For a resource to work effectively the people using the resource need to know and appreciate what it is and the people providing the resource need to understand where the resource-users are coming from. This project is a two-way process, which supports collaboration between the provider and the user.

## The aims of the project are to:

- develop a professional/collaborative relationship between special and mainstream schools;
- develop a professional partnership between teachers in a mainstream and special school;
- enhance and develop teacher effectiveness in catering for students with special educational needs in all of the schools involved;
- create a climate of openness in schools that will facilitate the sharing of expertise and of good practice.

## Participating schools

The lead school of the *Special School as a Resource* project is Scoil Bernadette, Montenotte, Cork. Scoil Bernadette is a school for 12 -18 year old students with a mild general learning disability. It is funded by the Department of Education and Science and is under the aegis of the COPE Foundation, Cork. Mr. Don McAleese is the principal of Scoil Bernadette and he leads a staff of 16 class/subject teachers and 13 classroom assistants. There are 106 students currently enrolled in the school. Students at Scoil Bernadette follow second-level programmes such as the Junior Certificate Schools' Programme (JCSP), the Leaving Certificate Applied (LC.A) and the Junior Certificate (JC).

## Three post-primary schools in close proximity to Scoil Bernadette are participating in the project. They are:

- St. Vincent's Girls' Secondary School, Cork. Principal: Donnacha O'Brien
- Mayfield Community College, Cork. Principal: Tony Walsh
- Deerpark C.B.S., Cork. Principal: Michael O'Floinn

## Progress to Date

Various mechanisms are being used to facilitate the aims of the project, including school visits, cluster meetings, seminars and formal professional development and support for teachers. The teachers from the participating schools visited Scoil Bernadette both individually and for a general 'Meet & Greet' session. Teachers toured the school and the 'visitors' met the staff of Scoil Bernadette for a social cup of coffee afterwards. The principals of the participating schools have also met together.

A framework has been designed to enable meaningful and professional exchange to take place. A class teacher from Scoil Bernadette partners a teacher in one of the three schools. S/he works with the teacher in the mainstream school for a designated time with a review at the end of the day. The mainstream teacher follows the same procedure in the special school. Subject specific teachers from Scoil Bernadette will also make exchanges with their counterparts in the mainstream school.

A joint in-service day took place in November. The focus of the day was learning and teaching for students with mild general learning difficulties. Inputs were given on Differentiating the Junior Certificate Science Curriculum, the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment Guidelines for Students with Mild General Learning Disability, A Day in the Life of a Student in a Mainstream Setting and finally, Working as a Special Needs Assistant in Scoil Bernadette. Successful workshops also generated interaction and exchange amongst the participants as well as providing hands-on experience of subject differentiation.

## Conclusion

This project is a truly collaborative effort. The wealth of knowledge and experience among the staffs of the participating schools when shared and documented will provide an additional resource for all schools. It is hoped that this project will contribute to the future development of shared professional dialogue and practice between special and mainstream schools.





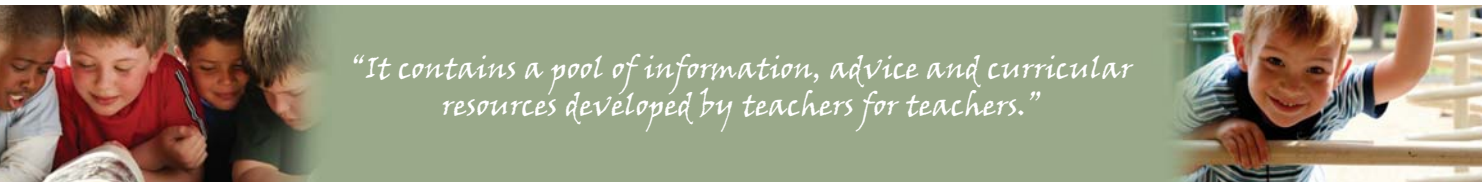
## TECHNOLOGY: FOCUS ON SPECIAL NEEDS

*Neil O'Sullivan, National Centre for Technology in Education (NCTE) Project Officer – Digital Schools/Special Education Needs & ICT.*

Scoilnet, Ireland's official portal site for Irish education is a valuable learning resource. It contains a pool of information, advice and curricular resources developed by teachers for teachers. The Scoilnet special education section ([www.scoilnet.ie/T\\_Sen.aspx](http://www.scoilnet.ie/T_Sen.aspx)) provides a focus on areas that are of particular interest to parents and teachers of students with special educational needs, including links to:

- information on provision and support for students with special educational needs and their teachers in Ireland;
- information sheets about different disabilities;
- relevant organisations working in the field;
- Guidelines for Teachers of Students with General Learning Disabilities;
- resources for pupils with special educational needs identified and reviewed by teachers (accessible via the Resource Finder on Scoilnet).

The NCTE's Special Educational Needs (SEN) and Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Initiative (<http://www.ncte.ie/SpecialNeedsICT/>) focuses on the particular needs of students with special educational needs and their teachers, with a view to ensuring that they are included in the main activities and initiatives of the NCTE. For information and support on additional activities and projects which are focused on the specific ICT needs of students and teachers as they relate to special education, contact the Special Educational Needs ICT Officer at 01 7008875 or email at [specialneedstechnology@ncte.ie](mailto:specialneedstechnology@ncte.ie)



*“It contains a pool of information, advice and curricular resources developed by teachers for teachers.”*

## LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT FOR DEAF STUDENTS

*Michael Woods, St. Mary's School for Deaf Girls, Cabra, Dublin 7.*

Finding age-appropriate material for teenagers whose spoken language is delayed or disordered, for whatever reason, can be a challenge. When the students are also deaf, have a mild general learning disability and, in some cases, have English as a second language, it is really welcome to find something which meets their individual and collective needs. We feel that we have found something really valuable in the European Language Institute (ELI) series of Flip Posters which we reviewed for the Special Education Support Service (SESS).

As most of our students come from different parts of the country and increasingly overseas, the basis for shared experience can be limited. Finding a common (visual) frame of reference to develop oral/sign language is really important. The series of twenty posters, which are laminated so that you can use marker pens on them, starts with two characters, a boy and a girl of about twelve. Slowly we see them grow up until they are in their late teens. As they develop, the characters encounter familiar social and work situations that many teenagers experience. This has given us the added bonus of being able to discuss the social, personal and health education (SPHE) related topics of drinking alcohol, friendships with the opposite sex and healthy eating, in the context of the characters in a natural and spontaneous way.

The posters are carefully designed to build up core vocabulary and have opportunities for revision of vocabulary without too much tedious over-learning. The series comes with a comprehensive teacher's guidebook. This guidebook is in French but simply laid out and accessible. There are about twenty sub-headings to develop language in each poster and literally hundreds of ways the posters can be used through drama and role-play, as well as opportunities to extend language, grammar and expressive vocabulary. For the students who have English as a second language (ESL students), the opportunities for recasting and giving direct feedback are invaluable. The duration of each lesson was between one hour and one hour and a quarter, but there is every opportunity to extend this. We used the digital camera and vocabulary lists to display the work, which proved a very effective way for students to look back at what they had learned and to revise core vocabulary. When finished, the display was transferred to an oversized book for our ESL students to use.

These posters are referred to as *Flip Posters: For Sign Language Teachers* and they are available from Forest Books Ltd.

### Reference

Flip Posters: For Sign Language Teachers. 008130. Copyright © Forest Books Ltd. 2007.  
All Rights Reserved. ([www.forestbooks.com](http://www.forestbooks.com))



# CROSS-BORDER PROFESSIONAL EXCHANGE PROGRAMME (2004-2006)

*Helen Ginty, Assistant National Co-ordinator, SESS. Helen is seconded from Scoil Iosagain, Bunclraha, Co. Donegal.*

The Special Educational Needs Cross-Border Professional Exchange Programme, funded under PEACE II, began in September 2004 and ended in June 2006. This programme enabled teachers, educational psychologists and other professionals from the border counties of the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland, to come together and exchange experiences and models of best practice. This initiative established Dyslexia, Autism and Marginalised Youth Cluster Groups, North and South, and facilitated programmes of joint work. Each cluster group produced educational resources which have proved useful to other professionals working in the area of Autism, Dyslexia and Marginalised Youth. These resources are available on the SESS website ([www.sess.ie](http://www.sess.ie)). Under the auspices of a North-South Steering Committee and with a home in Monaghan Education Centre, the project manager, Andrea Quinn, enabled the enthusiasm, dedication and commitment of all the participants involved.

## **Autism Cluster Group**

This group produced a document entitled *Opening the Spectrum – Insights into Working with Pupils on the Autistic Spectrum*, which is presented in a case-study form that outlines individual pupils' profiles. Woven into the case studies are the responses of individual teachers, the schools and the wider school community. Experiences range from an initial "opening of the spectrum" to "assisting inclusion in varied settings", to "providing support" through accessing the resources and interest of the wider school community. Firstly, a pupil's profile is presented, the teacher's response is then outlined and, finally, key learning points are summarised at the end of each case study. The case studies convey the fear, dedication, determination and commitment of the participants to ensure that the pupil is supported and included. It is hoped that by "opening the spectrum" others will come to appreciate the colourful, unusual, sometimes amusing, and sometimes challenging way these pupils view the world.

## **Dyslexia Cluster Group**

This group produced a document entitled *Inclusive Dyslexia-Friendly Practice*, an accompanying DVD and a toolkit containing resources helpful to those working with pupils with dyslexia. The participants present two approaches to creating inclusive dyslexia-friendly schools. They used the British Dyslexia Association (BDA) standards and the accompanying Achieving Dyslexia-Friendly Schools Information Pack as points of reference. The impact of dyslexia on the emotional development of both the pupil and his/her family is presented, with some suggested strategies for addressing the challenges. The section on improving school and classroom practices includes a number of resources. These are demonstrated on the accompanying DVD.

Practical tips for achieving an inclusive dyslexia-friendly school are included. Information and Communication Technology (ICT) software that supports dyslexia is examined, together with the question of how pupils can use ICT to improve their learning. A number of support booklets have also been designed. The booklets outline strategies for the pupil and his/her parents with regard to the transition from primary to post-primary school. Booklets entitled *Tips for Post-Primary Teachers and Subject Advice* are also included.

## **Marginalised Cluster Group**

This group produced a document entitled *It's Good to Talk – Using Case-Based Learning*. The group chose case-based learning as an approach to their work because they felt that it was particularly suitable for their purposes. Case-based learning is a strategy which uses stories of real-life events as a vehicle for discussion and creative thinking around issues relevant to school communities. A DVD accompanies this publication and serves as a record of the case-based sessions held by the cluster group participants.

## **Outcomes**

Outcomes from the programme are extremely positive and a number of useful publications and support materials have been produced which will be of benefit to the wider education system. This is aside from the very real benefits that have been gained by the participants. These benefits include being able to come together to exchange information and share their common desire to effect improvements in the educational attainments of pupils. Ongoing networking is now common to the clusters.

*"Outcomes from the programme have been extremely positive and a number of useful publications and support materials have been produced."*





## “IN SKUL I LERN 2 SPEL VERY DEY”

*Ann Marie Byrne, Assistant National Co-ordinator, SESS. Ann Marie is seconded from St. Brendan’s National School, Sligo.*

### Introduction

As teachers, we are adept at interpreting spelling errors. Occasionally, however, we encounter a spelling error that is so bizarre it challenges even the most proficient “interpreter”.

## “DA GHICI IS IN DA WATHER”

In reading this sentence, it is clear that something is in the water, but what?? The word “ghici” is in fact, “fish”. The “gh” makes the “f” sound as in cough and the “ci” makes “sh” sound as in magician.

### Spelling Strategies

Poor spelling is generally a feature of dyslexia and can be difficult to alleviate. The following are some strategies which are useful in dealing with spelling difficulties.

#### • Record and analyse pupils’ spelling errors

Keep a copy on the desk, and, as you are correcting work, jot down the words that pose difficulty for the pupil. Note any patterns that emerge – phonemic errors, prefixes, suffixes, particular letter strings, high-frequency words. Build up a bank of problem/difficult words. These can be written on personal flashcards and into a personal pupil dictionary.

#### • High-frequency words

Provide pupils with a list of high-frequency words in alphabetical order, e.g. Dolch List or Fry’s 300 Instant Sight Words. Fry’s list can be downloaded from [www.literacyconnections.com](http://www.literacyconnections.com). There are lots of useful ideas on this website for creating “word walls” and teaching the spelling of high-frequency words. Use visual cues to support spelling. These will help pupils recall difficult words.

#### • Visualisation/internal rehearsal

Write the word on the board or on a flashcard.

Draw attention to letter strings or an unusual letter pattern.

night – night

If possible, draw a visual cue for the word.

Ask the pupil to trace over the word with index finger, while saying each letter and the whole word when finished.

n - i - g - h - t    night

Ask the pupil to trace the word in the air, arm and hand extended in front, reciting each letter and whole word as before (sky writing).

Encourage pupil to close eyes and “take a picture” of the word in their mind. Talk through the word with the pupil as they are doing this, highlighting the unusual letter strings etc.

Ask the pupil to write the word in their mind.

Ask the pupil to write the word in their copy.

Check spelling.

#### • Mnemonics

Mnemonics are useful to assist memory and recall of unusual spelling patterns.

“because” – big elephants can always understand small elephants

“said” – santa arrives in December

#### • Visual associative approach

Draw attention to words within words and develop visual associations. Teachers are very familiar with “headache” and “toothake”.

Teacher gets an ache when there is a lot of noise. This technique can help pupils to remember words with unusual letter patterns.



*“Mnemonics are useful to assist memory and recall of unusual spelling patterns.”*





*“It is useful to display subject-specific words on wall charts or to provide students with subject word lists.”*

• **Fernald Approach**

- Teacher says the word, e.g. establish.
- Pupil repeats the word and counts the syllables.
- Teacher writes the word and underlines the syllables, drawing attention to vowels. es tab lish
- Pupil traces over each syllable with index finger while saying the word.
- Pupil covers the word and writes each syllable, saying the word slowly.
- Pupil is encouraged to visualise the word, syllable by syllable.
- Pupil writes the whole word from memory.
- Teacher checks the spelling.

• **Have-a-go pad**

Encourage pupils to make an attempt at spelling problem words rather than asking for the spelling every time. Highlight any part of the word that the pupil spells correctly and acknowledge effort. The correct spelling is written into the personal pupil dictionary.

Name:

1st try	2nd try	Correct Spelling

• **Subject walls/vocabulary lists**

It is useful to display subject-specific words on wall charts or to provide pupils with subject word lists to assist them in their written work. For older students, it is useful to have vocabulary notebooks in each subject.

• **Look-Copy-Trace, Picture -Write-Check**

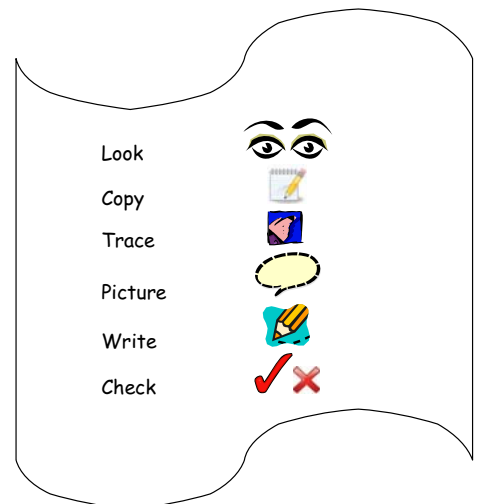
It is recommended to teach this method of learning spellings systematically, and to make parents aware of the steps involved, as otherwise the process can simply become a homework exercise in transcription. With practice, pupils become very proficient in the steps involved in a multi-sensory approach to learning and teaching spellings. A designated spelling copy is useful.

Words for spelling are written clearly at the top of the page.

The pupil is encouraged to

- look at the word, read the word aloud and spell the word aloud, saying the whole word at the end;
- copy the word a number of times, each time spelling aloud and saying the whole word at the end;
- trace the word with his/her finger, each time spelling aloud and saying the whole word at the end;
- close his/her eyes and picture the individual letters of the word;
- turn to the back of the copy and write the word from memory;
- check the spelling.

A chart can be compiled with the above steps and visual cue beside each one. This chart can be displayed in a prominent position in the classroom and miniature copies provided for pupils' spelling copies.





The process may be repeated if errors occur. As pupils' spelling improves, it may not be necessary to use all of the steps in the process; however, it is important to continue to encourage pupils to read, write and picture the words. As spelling is largely a visual exercise, it helps to write spellings rather than requesting pupils to spell aloud. To reinforce spellings, pupils should have a spelling practice notebook in school and get in to the daily routine of writing the previous night's spellings in to the notebook first thing each morning. A buddy system is useful to check spellings.

- **Simultaneous oral spelling (SOS)**

The pupil spells the word aloud as they write. As they get older, pupils will spell the word in their head. This verbalisation technique is also useful when writing dictated sentences.

- **Spelling rules**

Spelling rules are useful. Rather than teaching rules in isolation, it is best to teach the rules as particular words occur in the pupils' reading or writing, e.g. city. Soft "c" rule – "c" goes soft and makes an "s" sound when it is followed by e, i, or y. Encourage pupils to be word detectives and to look for words-within-words, prefixes, suffixes, patterns and rule breakers.

- **Cursive handwriting**

Cursive handwriting provides a rhythm and flow to handwriting strokes and aids memory.

## Spelling Aids

For pupils who have persistent spelling difficulties, the following spelling aids can be useful:

- **Pocket Spellers**

Handheld Pocket Spellers contain spelling corrections for approximately 100,000 words. The pupil types in his/her best phonetic spelling approximation; the correct spelling or a list of alternative words will appear on the screen, depending on the pupil's phonetic spelling ability. Pocket spellers usually contain a list of commonly confused words, a databank of names and numbers, a calculator, word games such as anagrams, memory games, and help with crossword solutions. Pocket Speller - [www.franklin-uk.co.uk](http://www.franklin-uk.co.uk) and also available from Easons Bookshops and from the Argos Catalogue.

For younger pupils, or those who have difficulty with phonetic spelling, the Children's Talking Dictionary and Spell Corrector may be useful. The pupil speaks the word aloud and the correct spelling with the definition appears on the screen. Children's Talking Dictionary and Spell Corrector - [www.franklin.com](http://www.franklin.com)

- **The Aurally Coded English (ACE) Spelling Dictionary**

The dictionary classifies words according to the initial letter, first vowel and the number of syllables. Using this index system, the pupil is referred to the page where the problem word is found. The dictionary contains more than 16,000 words, including a comprehensive list of commonly misspelt words. The ACE Spelling Dictionary is suitable for older pupils. To use it, a knowledge of syllables and short and long vowel sounds is necessary. Moseley, D. (1995) ACE Spelling Dictionary, 2nd ed, Cambridge: LDA, ISBN: 1855032147. Available to order online from Outside the Box Learning: [www.otb.ie](http://www.otb.ie) and from Amazon [www.amazon.co.uk](http://www.amazon.co.uk)

**"Ins choo oI I earn tos pel lever yd ay"**

*"A buddy system is useful to check spellings."*





# BRIDGING THE GAP BETWEEN PRIMARY AND POST-PRIMARY SCHOOL

*How teachers can assist pupils with special educational needs in the transition between primary and post-primary. Deirdre Kelleher, Assistant National Co-ordinator, SESS. Deirdre is seconded from Scoil Naomh Laichtin, Donoughmore, Co. Cork.*

Transition from primary to post-primary is a significant event in the life of any pupil and, while entering into this new situation may prove exciting in itself, it can also be accompanied by a sense of apprehension. While many pupils experience a sense of anxiety during this transition period, for the pupil with special educational needs, the sense of anxiety can be compounded and last for a longer duration. In order to minimise the difficulties accompanied with the move, transition planning should, at the very least, begin early in sixth class and continue into the pupil's first year in post-primary school.

## Suggested tips for primary teachers

- Liaise with the post-primary schools.
- Teach the pupils how to read school timetables. Get samples from post-primary schools. This can be done within whole-class maths lessons.
- Give the class different due dates for certain pieces of homework.
- Model and practice recording homework in a journal at the end of lessons as opposed to the end of the school day.
- Teach key words for specific subjects such as home economics, metalwork etc. This can be done within the oral language strand of the English curriculum.
- Integrate transition activities into the social, personal and health education (SPHE) programme.
- Attend open evenings in the post-primary school. This is a good opportunity to take photographs of rooms, teachers etc. These can be used to familiarise the pupil with the school and personnel prior to entry.
- Identify key personnel in the post-primary school and explain their roles to the pupil, e.g. class tutor, year head, chaplain, guidance counsellor etc
- With parental permission, transfer information to the post-primary school as soon as possible. Remember resource hours and assistive technology all need to be re-applied for by the receiving post-primary school
- Plan a leaving ceremony for pupils' last day in sixth class. This is a clear signal to the pupil that they are moving on.
- Be prepared for the post-primary school to make contact once the pupil has enrolled.

## Suggested tips for post-primary teachers

- Organise meetings and open days for parents, pupils and the staff of the feeder schools. These need not necessarily be on the same day.
- Liaise with feeder primary schools.
- Gather as much relevant, up-to-date information from the appropriate partners to facilitate the application for suitable resources as early as possible. Resources do not automatically transfer.
- Provide information packs giving details on subject curricula, extra-curricular activities, resources etc. Have a simplified version for pupils and another version for parents.
- Explain the roles of the Year Head, Class Tutor, Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator etc. to the primary school staff and to all parents and pupils.
- Organise specific induction activities.
- Put a mentoring system in place that allows older pupils to take responsibility for first-year pupils and activities within induction week.
- Consider how entrance examinations may have to be modified to take into account pupils' needs. For example, find out if the pupil is used to the assistance of a special needs assistant (SNA) in completing tasks.
- Provide name badges for teachers. This can be very helpful for first-year pupils in the first few weeks.
- Provide opportunities for subject teachers to learn about pupils' specific needs.
- Put a formalised system in place for the dissemination of information to teachers.
- Explain to pupils how to read timetables.
- Explain and model how to record homework in a journal.
- Clearly explain both school and class organisation – don't assume the pupils will understand automatically.
- Use colour coding to assist the pupil in reading timetables and organising the books required for individual curricular areas.
- Plan a beginning ceremony which focuses on the positives of being in the new school.
- Don't assume the pupils know about lockers, canteen etc. - explicitly explain.
- Put a clear and effective anti-bullying policy in place.
- Offer a range of "taster" subjects during pupils' first year.

**The SESS, in partnership with the education centres, will be organising seminars in relation to this topic. Contact your local education centre for details.**

*"Remember resource hours and assistive technology all need to be re-applied for by the receiving post-primary school."*



# DIFFERENTIATION: TRANSFORMING LEARNING FOR TEACHERS AND STUDENTS

*Evelyn Jackson, Galway Community College, Móinín na gCiseach, Galway and Sean O'Leary, Assistant National Co-ordinator, SESS. Sean is seconded from St. Caimin's Community School in Shannon.*

Teaching and learning methodologies that focus on student learning, rather than on the teacher or on the content being covered, lie at the heart of differentiation. In this way, all students are empowered to engage with school curricula by providing learning tasks that are tailored to their needs.

Teachers can differentiate

- the content being learned by students;
- the process or way in which students access material;
- the way in which students show what they have learned.

After an initial SESS seminar on inclusion and differentiation for post-primary schools, teachers from one school were offered continuous support to enhance their ability to implement differentiated curricula for their students. One of the science teachers, Evelyn Jackson, used a differentiated resource pack developed by the SESS. This article briefly describes the thoughts that she recorded in her reflective diary as she gained greater confidence in differentiating the curriculum for her students.

*"The differentiated lesson went really well. The students were very responsive. I enjoyed it myself. A special needs assistant came to me today to say that the change in the student that she looks after was fantastic after the lesson yesterday. She said that her student was much more confident even in the classes that followed.*

*It's an uphill struggle teaching a class with a high proportion of under-achievers with a wide range of needs all in the same class. I'm not ready to leave teaching by any means so I'm going to change my teaching methods. My students won't be changing so I've decided that I'm going to have to adapt myself to suit their needs.*

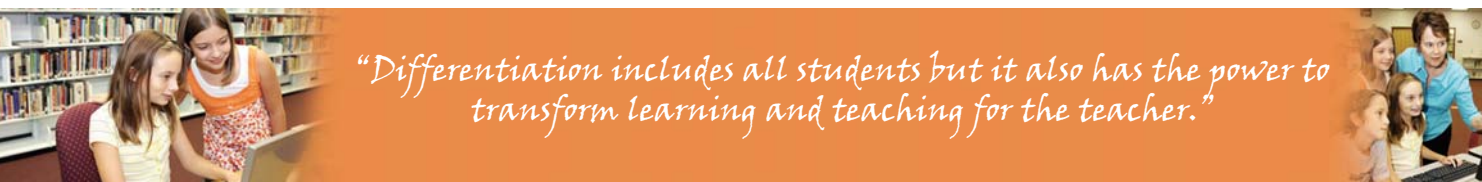
*My main concern is that my (students') results will go into decline if I change my teaching style and I've always prided myself on my students' results. Maybe that won't happen, maybe by changing my teaching methodologies I'll be back on track. It's hard to imagine though how students coming into first year with reading ages of seven to ten years can be brought up to junior certificate level."*

Differentiation includes all students but it also has the power to transform learning and teaching for the teacher. This is evident in the following passages that Evelyn recorded.

*"Using the laptop and projector has been great for visually stimulating students and great for me too, in that I can move around the class more. I'm also more aware of the non-Irish national students and I'm trying to cater for them more. The new strategies have benefited me in that I feel as if I'm reaching out to more students in my classes and I'm more satisfied with my work personally. I know the students are enjoying the classes more from the feedback they give me and that makes me happier.*

*It's like a breath of fresh air. Obviously we all know the curriculum content of our respective subjects, but there is always room for improvement in the way we deliver such facts. I think I'm actually a nicer teacher this year in that I'm more in tune with the individuals within my classes. My students are definitely enjoying science more and are achieving higher grades."*

As illuminated in Evelyn's diary, differentiation is a critical component of teaching any subject at any level within primary and post-primary schools. As teachers become more comfortable with the concept of differentiation and witness at first hand the many benefits that it provides for their students, their own professional knowledge, skills and practice are enhanced.



*"Differentiation includes all students but it also has the power to transform learning and teaching for the teacher."*



# SPOTLIGHT

## SESS Seminars

SESS in collaboration with education centres provides the following seminars:

- **Dyslexia: 'Dyslexia in School: A Seminar on Planning and Intervention for Class Teachers':** *A two-hour session for whole-school staffs.*
- **Autism: 'An Introduction to Autistic Spectrum Disorders (ASDs)':** *A one-day seminar for class teachers who currently have a child with autism in their classes.*
- **Managing Challenging Behaviour in the Special School Setting:** *A one-and-a-half-day seminar for whole-staffs of schools for pupils with mild and moderate general learning disabilities.*

## Summer Course Programme

Special schools who require additional support to deal on a day-to day basis with serious and persistent challenging behaviour requiring specific interventions, have sought specific continuous professional development (CPD) on the use of specific interventions at whole-staff and whole-team level. SESS has invited special schools to avail of funding for this special training as part of the summer course programme. Some schools identified their own professional development requirements in the area of special educational needs and, with the assistance of SESS, hosted their own whole-staff summer course in July 2007

## TEACCH Courses

Courses related to the Treatment and Education of Autistic and related Communication-handicapped Children (TEACCH) approach will take place as follows:

- Feb 25th - 29th: Five-day course
- March 31st - April 1st: Two-day seminar
- April 3rd - 4th: Two-day seminar
- April 7th - 11th: Five-day course
- May 26th - 30th: Five-day course

Arrangements with regard to venues have yet to be finalised.

## Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS)

Pyramid Educational Consultants are providing a number of PECS courses in Ireland during this academic year. Teachers of students with ASDs who wish to attend a PECS workshop can apply for funding through the SESS Local Initiatives Scheme. Two-day workshops are being held in Limerick (25th & 26th Feb), Dublin (17th & 18th April) and Derry (19th & 29th May).

## International Speakers

SESS continues with its international programme. In January, Tisha Gonzalez and Cissy Coleman (Texas, USA) will deliver a series of seminars on teaching communication, reading and mathematics to students with ASDs. Dr Amanda Kirby will speak on Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder in Athlone (14th April) and Dublin (15th April). In addition, John Visser will speak on classroom management and students with social, emotional and behaviour difficulties in Kilkenny (29th Feb), Clare (7th March), Sligo (18th April) and Monaghan (23rd May). Please keep an eye on our website [www.sess.ie](http://www.sess.ie) for up-to-date details.

## Institute of Child Education and Psychology (ICEP) Europe

ICEP Europe provides online courses designed to help teachers meet the challenges of educating children in the 21st century. Courses are part-funded by the Special Education Support Service and the Teacher Education Section of the Department of Education and Science under the National Development Plan. For further information, phone (045) 982628, e-mail [info@icepe.eu](mailto:info@icepe.eu) or visit [www.icepe.eu](http://www.icepe.eu)

## Accredited Special Education Course for Mainstream Teachers

The Minister for Education and Science, Mary Hanafin, recently announced a new course which addresses the needs of mainstream teachers in meeting the challenges posed by recent legislative changes, an increasingly diverse student population and the inclusion of students with significant special educational needs in mainstream schools. For more information, contact St. Patrick's College, Drumcondra ([www.spd.dcu.ie](http://www.spd.dcu.ie)) or ICEP Europe ([www.icepe.eu](http://www.icepe.eu)).

## Contemporary Applied Behaviour Analysis

Under the direction of Dr Patricia Daly, SESS is providing a thirty-hour course on Contemporary Applied Behaviour Analysis, which is being attended by thirty teachers working in classes/units for students with ASDs in the Limerick area. Professor Daly is Director of Special Education at Mary Immaculate College, Limerick. Credits will be awarded for completion of this course, on the submission of assignments. Evaluation of the course to date by course participants has been extremely positive. It is intended to provide a similar course at another centre in the next term.

## SESS Office – Call save 1850 200884

The SESS office is hosted in the Cork Education Support Centre, The Rectory, Western Road, Cork. Maura Buckley is the Administrator, assisted by Eiméar Long and Deirdre O'Connell.

## CABHAIR Supports Teachers

We welcome articles from teachers as well as suggestions about future content.

**Editor:** [soleary@sess.ie](mailto:soleary@sess.ie)

**Website:** [www.sess.ie](http://www.sess.ie)

**Post:** Editor, CABHAIR, SESS, Cork Education Support Centre, Western Road, Cork.

## In the Next Issue

- The implementation of the Education for Persons with Special Education Needs Act (EPSEN) 2004
- Teaching children with physical disabilities
- Teaching children who are deaf
- Inclusive education in a diverse society

# THE LETTER 'B': TERMINOLOGY IN SPECIAL EDUCATION

*Deirdre Kelleher, Assistant National Co-ordinator, SESS. Deirdre is seconded from Scoil Naomh Laichtin, Donoughmore, Co. Cork.*

## **BASELINE**

Baseline data refers to the current level a pupil is functioning at before instruction. Baseline data are often collected to identify the starting point from which programmes can be created for pupils. Baseline data can be gathered from a variety of sources to include observations, interviews, checklists and assessments.

## **BASIC SIGHT VOCABULARY**

Basic sight vocabulary is an important element of the language base a pupil needs before beginning a structured reading programme. It is often acquired from a number of sources to include language experience material, large-format books, environmental print and flash cards. The Dolch basic sight vocabulary refers to the 220 most frequently found words in books that children read (excluding nouns). The Dolch list can be accessed from the SESS website [www.sess.ie](http://www.sess.ie) under the resources link.

## **BASIC SKILLS**

Skills in subjects like reading, writing, spelling, and mathematics are often referred to as basic skills.

## **BEHAVIOUR INTERVENTION PLAN (BIP)**

(also referred to as a Behaviour Management Plan, Behavioural Support Plan or Positive Behavioural Support Plan).

A BIP is an intervention plan created to address pupils' behaviour in an organised way. The purpose of this plan is to be able to identify the function of the behaviour and to set up structures to minimise the likelihood of the behaviour recurring. It must be familiar to all staff and be implemented by all staff. An ongoing process of identifying problem behaviours, observing and recording behaviours, implementing intervention strategies and evaluating the intervention is crucial to the success of any BIP. It is a cyclical approach because all inappropriate behaviours cannot be eradicated at once. Start with one behaviour and once this process has been completed, look to see if other behaviours need to be also addressed.

## **"BIG TOE FIRST"**

This is a preventative/management strategy suggested by Gerard Gordon and is a step-by-step approach in how to deal with incidences of challenging behaviour. The steps outlined range from least intrusive to most intrusive interventions. (Gordon, G. 1996 *Managing Challenging Children*, New Ross: Prim-Ed Publishing. ISBN 1864003022)

## **BILATERAL**

Something is bilateral if it affects both sides of the body

## **BRAILLE**

Braille is a tactile reading system consisting of patterns of raised dots that are felt by one's fingers to help those with visual impairments to read. Further information can be obtained from the National Braille Production Centre (NBPC), [www.braille.ie](http://www.braille.ie). The NBPC provides a nationwide service to primary and post-primary pupils with a visual impairment.

## **BRITTLE BONE DISEASE**

Brittle bone disease is a skeletal disease characterised by an abnormal fragility of the bones. Pupils with brittle bone disease bruise easily and may be thought of as accident-prone. Many pupils with brittle bone disease are left handed due to a high frequency of fractures to the right hand. The pupil with brittle bone disease is no more likely to have learning difficulties than the rest of his/her peers.

## **BUDDY SYSTEMS**

In relation to school, a buddy system is a peer-initiated approach system in which two pupils, buddies, engage in specific activities together. It can be used in the classroom in the completion of experiments and tasks, and can be used with all pupils. Pupils with special educational needs can be paired with a peer who does not have special educational needs as an element of a buddy system. Pupils entering a new school mid-year or at the start of term can also benefit from having a "buddy" in the same class.