Literacy and Numeracy for Learning and Life
Language and Communication for pupils with Severe and Profound General Learning Disabilities

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Communication and Language Seminar Outline

1. Overview
2. Challenges
3. Assessment
4. Strategies / Interventions
Framework for the Day

- Link Teacher
- Definition of Literacy
- Definition of SPGLD
- Literacy for pupils with SPGLD
- Language & Communication Curriculum for SPGLD
- Accessing the SPGLD Curriculum
- Assessment
- Strategies/Interventions
Definition of Literacy

Literacy includes the capacity to read, understand and critically appreciate various forms of communication including spoken language, printed text, broadcast media, and digital media.
Literacy in Early Childhood and Primary Education

NCCA Literacy Report

Skill in oral language a developmental pre-cursor to reading acquisition

Planned language learning experiences can enrich vocabulary
SPGLD

What is a Severe/Profound Disability?

It is someone with a severe/profound mental impairment which seriously limits one or more functional capacities (such as mobility, communication, self-care, self-direction, interpersonal skills, work tolerance, or work skills)

www.disabled-world.com

Students with SPGLD have the same general needs as any other student and will be similarly impacted by significant life changes

(NCCA 2001)
What are some characteristics of SPGLD?

- Significant delay in reaching developmental milestones
- Serious speech or communication problems
- A severe degree of apathy in relation to the environment
- Difficulty in basic physical mobility
- Inability to remember basic skills
Characteristics continued.....

Â Inability to generalise skills from one situation to another
Â Dependence on others to satisfy basic needs, e.g., feeding, toileting
Â Inability to live without support throughout life
Â A variety of medical conditions may accompany severe or profound disabilities, such as epilepsy, hydrocephalus and scoliosis.
Linkage

Language & Communication

SPGLD
What do we mean when we talk about communication and language?

How do pupils with SPGLD communicate?

What does language & communication look like in your school?

Do you at present differentiate between these two areas of the curriculum in your school?
Language & Communication

“Communication is central to the whole curriculum and has a special part to play in the education of students with SPGLD.

The term ‘language’ generally implies verbal communication, oral and written. However, the acquisition of language is quite advanced and is far removed from the first attempts at communication in early childhood”

Guidelines Severe and Profound General Learning Disabilities / Communication and Language / PRIMARY 2002
Language & Communication

The term ‘communication’ embraces verbal and non-verbal methods of receiving and giving information, essential when catering for students for whom verbal communication may not be an option”

For the student with SPGLD the starting point for communication may involve being alerted to the fact that a world exists outside himself/herself.

Guidelines Severe and Profound General Learning Disabilities / Communication and Language / PRIMARY 2002
Language & Communication

“Communicating intentionally is a very large step for students with SPGLD. It may take a long time to reach, and may not be achieved by all students”

Guidelines Severe and Profound General Learning Disabilities / Communication and Language / PRIMARY 2002
Stop and Think..

- Learning
- Communication
- Leading Literacy Core Team
- Support & CPD
- Assessment
- Collaboration
- Literacy
- Resource Building
- SSE
- Raising Awareness & Understanding
- Teaching
Focus

1. A big picture understanding
2. A good assessment
3. A focused and purposeful interventions
Challenges

- Challenges for pupils with SPGLD?
- Challenges for Teachers of pupils with SPGLD
The content of the Language & Communication curriculum for SPGLD is presented in three strands:

- Receptive and Expressive Language
- Reading
- Writing.

However, while content is presented in three strands, the strands are intrinsically linked. Every opportunity should be taken to link the three strands when planning the student’s communication programme.

(NCCA Curriculum Guidelines 2002)
Curriculum Strands
Receptive and expressive language

Â Awareness of all types of sensory stimuli is a basic first step towards communication.
Â Listening to and discriminating between sounds is important for all students.
Â Many students with SPGLD will depend on visual or tactile symbols in order to communicate. The development of all the senses is important.

Students need to learn that exerting control over people and objects in their environment is a highly pleasurable and rewarding experience.
Pre-intentional Communication

- As the student becomes aware of external stimuli, those working closely with him/her should be alert for any signs of body movement, vocalisations, or changes in facial expression/movements.

- The student gradually learns that a certain expression, sound or movement will have a particular effect.

- Learning that there is a connection between his/her actions and the consequences of that action is a vital step in the development of communication. This is called contingency awareness.
Intentional and functional communication

• For students learning to communicate, there must be a tangible reward for all effort.

• Generally, early communication will be about likes and dislikes, comfort and discomfort.

• As a student becomes adept at acting on the immediate environment he/she will need to establish a means of communication that can be understood by all those with whom he/she may wish to communicate.

• This can be done using facial expression/using body movements/gestures right up to pointing/use objects/pictures symbols etc.
Reading

Å Reading for SPGLD is far broader than the interpretation of text. Aims is to enable the student to make sense of and derive pleasure from all types of visual and tactile representations.

Å This involves looking at, listening to and touching objects, pictures, symbols, and text in an effort to gain meaning and enjoyment from them.

Å Functional reading involves attending to and discriminating between objects, pictures, symbols, and text.

Å Fostering enjoyment in reading includes listening to stories being read, and looking at and handling books.
Writing

“For students with severe and profound general learning disabilities, writing encompasses a broad range of methods of recording using objects, pictures, symbols or text”

Writing

• Writing encompasses a broad range of methods of recording using objects, pictures, symbols, or text.

• The focus is on enabling the student to make visual or tactile recordings & to communicate meaningful events/experiences/interests/information/thoughts/feelings.

• Initial writing activities also centre on making marks in a variety of ways using different medium.
Accessing the Curriculum
Literacy - Communication

NCCA Guidelines (1999)

The material in the Curriculum is arranged in three broad bands

- Literacy for pupil's with SPGLD's
  - Attending
  - Responding
  - Initiating
Literacy – Attending

Pupil uses senses to become aware of people, objects and activities in the immediate environment.
The Attending band focuses on students who are in the very early stages of awareness of the immediate environment.

Examples of the attending process in special classes include:

- Gentle movement
- Stilling of the body or the face,
- Vocalisation
- Tracking

Activity: features of attending
Handout 1
Literacy - Responding

**Responding:**

i. To act in return or in answer

ii. To speak, write, or act as a return to a stimulus

**Non-verbal responding:**

i. The intended response ideally should be recorded/classified in order to be assessed

ii. The response ideally must serve a communicative purpose

iii. The response must be meaningful for the pupil and the communicative partner
Literacy - Initiating

Initiating communication requires:

i. Cognitive: mental skills (Knowledge)

ii. Affective: growth in feelings or emotional areas (Attitude)

iii. Psychomotor: manual or physical skills (Skills) (Bloom 1956; Pohl 2000)
Stop and Think..