

Taskforce on Students with Learning Difficulties

JUNE 2014

Implementation Progress Report

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Implementation Progress Report and Next Steps Update: Executive Summary

Background

The Taskforce on Students with Learning Difficulties was an advisory body established in 2012, to provide the Minister for Education and Training with recommendations for classroom level intervention and support of children and young people in ACT government schools with learning difficulties. The Final Report from the Taskforce was presented to the Minister for Education and Training in July 2013. The report identified 14 strategies under the three key recommendations: A Consistent Systemic Approach, Building Staff Capacity and Building Partnerships with Families. The recommendations outline strategies for supporting students with learning difficulties who may be present in any P-12 classroom, and builds on the already high standard of professional practice in ACT government schools.

Key achievements The Taskforce on Students with Learning Difficulties project outputs have been achieved for the June quarter. These include:

- Workshops and information sessions have been delivered to staff and parent/carers to support the Gifted and Talented Policy “Dual Exceptionality” component.
- Pilot studies are underway in two primary schools in implementing the Response to Intervention (RTI) framework.
- Delivery of 11 more professional learning workshops (phases 5-11) have been completed for teachers, school leaders, learning support assistants and parent/carers.
- School representative teachers with specialist training in learning difficulties are building capacity and providing ongoing support in their schools. These teachers are supported by school psychologists and field literacy and numeracy teams.
- The Directorate school psychologists Good Practice Guide has been updated to include a response to intervention approach and processes to assess for a learning difficulty.
- The Directorate website has been updated to improve access to Taskforce on Students with Learning Difficulties reports and information.
- A presentation to the Taskforce on Students with Learning Difficulties members was delivered and highlighted project timelines, progress, professional learning data survey and next steps forward.
- The ‘online resource working party’ has begun development of the Directorate Learning Difficulties online resource for schools.
- The resource kit ‘Understanding Learning Difficulties- a Practical Guide’ has been provided to all school representative teachers in learning difficulties who have undertaken the professional learning and to all school psychologists.
- Online survey data has been gathered and analysed for the completed learning difficulties professional learning phases 1-11.

Next Steps

- Professional learning workshops phases 12-13 (3 workshops) will be delivered to school leadership teams, teachers, learning support assistants and parent/carers.
- A second presentation to the Taskforce on Students with Learning Difficulties members is scheduled for 24 July 2014.
- The Directorate website will include a Learning Difficulties page for community access to include information about adjustments, resources, links to relevant web sites and information in accessing support.

Recommendations progress update

Recommendation 1: A consistent systemic approach to maximise specific learning outcomes of students with Learning Difficulties

<p>Taskforce Recommendation Strategy 1. Development of protocols that include identifying, supporting and making adjustments for students with learning difficulties.</p> <p>Directorate's Response The Directorate will develop processes to articulate the roles, responsibilities and accountabilities for identifying, supporting and making reasonable adjustments for students with learning difficulties.</p>	<p>Status: Ongoing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Directorate has established a working party comprising of Directorate staff and a number of external/community experts to develop a resource for identifying, supporting and making adjustments for students with learning difficulties. The online resource will include fact sheets. It is anticipated the resource will be launched at the Directorate Learning Difficulties Conference 24 September 2014, which will include professional learning for teachers in using the online resource.
<p>Taskforce Recommendation Strategy 2. Addition of endorsed evidenced based approaches to the Literacy and Numeracy Strategy 2009-2013 to support the needs of students with learning difficulties.</p> <p>Directorate's Response The Directorate will investigate evidence-based approaches to supporting the needs of students with learning difficulties and develop a mechanism for endorsing such approaches.</p>	<p>Status: Ongoing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The ACT Education and Training Directorate (ACTETD) Literacy and Numeracy Strategy 2009 – 2013 has been replaced by the ACTETD Strategic Plan 2014 – 2017. The priorities, strategies and targets within the previous Strategy have been elevated deliberately to ensure literacy and numeracy is highlighted as core business and is reflected in the priorities, strategies and indicators in the new Strategic Plan for all Directorate staff.
<p>Taskforce Recommendation Strategy 3. Focus on learning difficulties and diversity in learning to be included as a key component in the Directorate's leadership program from 2014.</p> <p>Directorate's Response The Directorate will include a focus on learning difficulties and diversity in future leadership programs from 2014.</p>	<p>Status: Ongoing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Directorate communicates the importance of the Taskforce recommendations to school leaders through identifying it as a priority in the Education Capital: Leading the Nation 2014-2017 Action Plan (High Expectations, High Performance domain). The professional learning module for Principals and Deputy Principals: 'Information Session for Principals and Deputy Principals: A Whole School Approach to Learning Difficulties' was delivered 23 June 2014 to 41 participants.
<p>Taskforce Recommendation Strategy 4. Inclusion of how to meet the needs of twice exceptional students in the Directorate's Gifted and Talented Policy.</p>	<p>Status: Completed</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Directorate's Gifted and Talented Student policy was launched in February 2014. The policy and supporting documentation included advice and information about students who are 'twice exceptional' or have 'dual

<p>Directorate’s Response The Directorate has commenced the review of the Gifted and Talented Policy and will include provision for twice exceptional students.</p>	<p>exceptionality’.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A fact sheet for parents on dual exceptionality formed part of the series of parental guides that support the policy and is currently available on the Directorate website.
<p>Taskforce Recommendation Strategy 5. That the Directorate investigates models similar to Response to Intervention Models and what support would be needed to implement them within ACT government schools.</p> <p>Directorate’s Response The Directorate is currently investigating models similar to and including the Response to Intervention Model and will assess the appropriateness of such models in the ACT context including the identification of the support required for implementation.</p>	<p>Status: Ongoing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Namadgi School have been successfully implementing the Response to Intervention (RTI) framework across the school since early 2013. • The Directorate commenced investigation of applying the (RTI) framework in Taylor and Theodore primary schools, as 10 week pilot studies, in term 2 2014. • The professional learning package developed for teachers (see Strategy 6) includes a focus on the Response to Intervention framework to support students.

Recommendation 2: Building staff capacity to meet the needs of students with Learning Difficulties

Taskforce Recommendation

Strategy 6. A comprehensive professional learning pathway with increasing levels of specialist knowledge to support a consistent systematic approach to learning difficulties.

Directorate's Response

The Directorate will identify professional learning strategies and pathways to strengthen a consistent and systematic approach to supporting students with learning difficulties.

Status: Ongoing

- A professional learning package has been developed and is being delivered over Terms 1 to 3 2014.
- See Attachment 1 page 12
- Schools have identified a teacher/s to attend the suite of professional learning workshops. These teachers will develop expertise and contribute to building staff capacity through delivering workshops and providing a focus on learning difficulties in their schools. These teachers are being supported in their schools by school psychologists, literacy and numeracy officers, disability education staff and student wellbeing staff from central office.

For teachers, the **professional learning** package delivered has included:

- Workshops with school senior psychologists in 'Understanding Learning Difficulties',
- 'Intervention Strategies to Support Students with Learning Difficulties' with external experts,
- 'Evidence Based Studies with Dyslexia SPELD ACT and University of Canberra',
- 'Using Inclusive Technologies Tools for Students with Learning Difficulties' with assistance from external presenters,
- 'Supporting Schools with their implementation plan' with Directorate staff,
- 'Learning Difficulties- Team and Whole School Approach' (to compliment the 'Understanding Learning Difficulties- a Practical Guide') with an educational psychologist from Western Australia who developed the guide, and
- 'Early Childhood/Primary: Using Inclusive Technologies to Support Students in the Early Years with Learning Difficulties' with an external presenter
- 'Teacher Assessment Tools and Building a Community of Practice for Learning Difficulties' with Directorate presenters

The next professional learning phase for teachers includes the 'Learning Difficulties Conference' with a range of expert presents, VIP guests and Directorate staff.

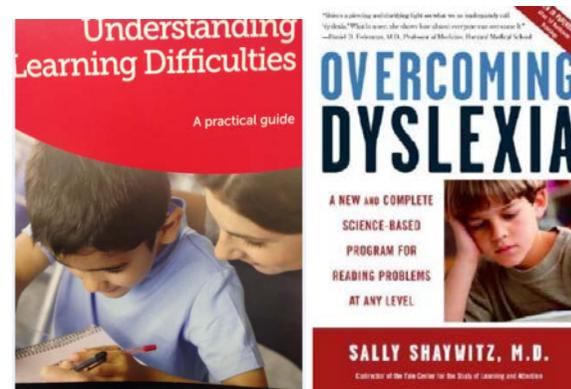
LIFE page online resource

- A professional learning community resource on Learning Difficulties is located on the Directorate Digital Backpack Online LIFE page and provides staff across the Directorate a place to share teaching and learning

interventions and evidence-based resources for students with learning difficulties. The page reflects the professional learning package that has been delivered and includes digitally captured teaching practices and discussions, presentation videos, resources, presentation PowerPoint's, handouts, links and supports. It has enabled representative teachers to access these resources easily and share in their schools.

Understanding Learning Difficulties: A Practical Guide

- In May a professional learning workshop for representative teachers was delivered by Mandy Nayton, an educational and developmental psychologist and adjunct research fellow at Curtin University from Western Australia. Mandy developed the resource kit 'Understanding Learning Difficulties: A Practical Guide' in conjunction with AUSPELD. All representative teachers received one copy per school and a copy of the highly acclaimed publication 'Overcoming Dyslexia' by Sally Shaywitz. The resource kit is a comprehensive and practical resource and includes evidence based interventions and strategies. It also includes a CD with additional resources and 30 information sheets. Teachers were thrilled to have this resource made available to share in their schools. Additionally, all school psychologists have received a copy of the resource pack.



Taskforce Recommendation
Strategy 7. Targets for completion of training to ensure that a pathway of expertise is established to embed knowledge in all sectors and across leadership.

Directorate's Response
 The Directorate will develop targets for participation in training in the area of

Status: Ongoing

- Phase 1 of the professional learning package 'Understanding Learning Difficulties' presented by Directorate schools psychologists was accredited with the Teacher Quality Institute (TQI) in May.
- The professional learning package has set targets for completion where data will be collected to monitor attendance and the quality and value of the

<p>learning difficulties across the system with initial targets to be identified for primary, high school and college settings.</p>	<p>professional learning workshops. Attendance figures to June 2014 were 953 teachers from 75 schools. <i>This number includes a combination of teachers who have attended all the workshops or have attended selected workshops.</i></p> <p>Targets</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By end 2016 all schools will have at least one teacher trained in building the capacity of school staff to support students with a learning difficulty. • By end 2018 these teachers will have delivered annual training on specific learning difficulties to classroom teachers in schools. • By end 2018 all school leaders will have participated in annual professional learning on specific learning difficulties.
<p>Taskforce Recommendation Strategy 8. Each School Network to be supported by officers with specialist skills in learning difficulties.</p> <p>Directorate’s Response The Directorate will further strengthen the specialist expertise to support students including those with learning difficulties and will establish processes for access to network support.</p>	<p>Status: Ongoing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff capacity is being built across schools by the teachers who have been attending the professional learning phases. These trained teachers will provide professional learning within their school. The provision of the resource kit ‘Understanding Learning Difficulties: A Practical Guide’ and the Directorate Online LIFE page in Learning Difficulties has also assisted teachers in building this capacity. • School psychologists, literacy and numeracy officers, disability education staff and student wellbeing staff are continuing to provide additional support to school staff and across networks through the Network Student Engagement Teams (NSET).
<p>Taskforce Recommendation Strategy 9. Systemic professional learning for Learning Support Assistants (LSA’s) working in the area of learning difficulties.</p> <p>Directorate’s Response The Directorate will identify and provide appropriate professional learning opportunities for learning support assistants in the area of learning difficulties.</p>	<p>Status: Ongoing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A professional learning workshop designed for learning support assistants ‘How to support Students with Learning Difficulties’ was delivered on 12 and 13 May. • A second workshop ‘Using Inclusive Technologies to Support Students with Learning Difficulties’ was delivered 20 June. • To support the professional learning workshops, learning support assistants are able to access resources from the Directorate online LIFE page to access online resources, handouts and presentations. <p>Attendance figures to June 2014 were 85 LSA’s from 48 schools.</p>
<p>Taskforce Recommendation Strategy 10. Clarification of the role of Learning Support Assistants working in the</p>	<p>Status: Ongoing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A working party is developing content that will define and profile the role of learning support assistants working in the area of learning difficulties in

<p>area of learning difficulties.</p> <p>Directorate’s Response The Directorate will clarify the roles and responsibilities of school staff in providing support for students with learning difficulties.</p>	<p>supporting teachers and students.</p>
<p>Taskforce Recommendation <u>Strategy 11.</u> Investigate and determine a system wide approach to assessment of students with learning difficulties.</p> <p>Directorate’s Response The Directorate will investigate leading practice options for assessment of students with learning difficulties to develop a system wide approach.</p>	<p>Status: Ongoing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A system wide approach for assessment to help identify students with possible learning difficulties is being developed to guide school staff in the assessment of students with learning difficulties. • A 2 hour workshop using assessment and screening tools is included in Phase 12 of the professional learning package and was delivered in August. • The Directorate has purchased a teacher administered Dyslexia Screener tool. This is being trialled at two pilot schools with support from school psychologists. A report reviewing the tool will provide recommendations for teachers and school psychologists. • School psychologists updated their Good Practice Guide to include a response to intervention approach to assessing for a learning difficulty.

Recommendation 3: Partnerships with families

<p>Taskforce Recommendation Strategy 12. The Directorate to develop multiple communication mechanisms to support families of students with learning difficulties.</p> <p>Directorate's Response The Directorate will develop a range of communication mechanisms that support families of students and schools meeting the needs of students with learning difficulties.</p>	<p>Status: Ongoing</p> <p>Directorate Website</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Improved access to the Taskforce on Students with Learning Difficulties Final Report and background information on the Directorate website has been actioned. The Final Taskforce Report and February quarterly report is now more easily accessible.• The development of content for a Learning Difficulties page on the Directorate website commenced in May.• A media officer has been employed to develop the Learning Difficulties page. This is currently being developed in collaboration with ETD Media and will include supports for parents and carers such a communication flow chart to access support in schools, and other useful links to agencies/support services, resources and information. <p>Workshops</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Parents and carers have attended attend three workshops by expert presenters that run parallel to the teacher workshops in the professional learning package. This included; 'Using Inclusive Technology Tools for Students with Learning Difficulties', 'Supporting my Child at Home and School' and 'Early Childhood/Primary- Using Inclusive Technology Tools to Support Students in the Early Years with Learning Difficulties'. <p>Attendance figures to June 2014 were 133 Parents/Carers.</p>
<p>Taskforce Recommendation Strategy 13. The Directorate to investigate enhancement of partnerships with therapists and other professionals working with teachers, parents, carers and directly with students.</p> <p>Directorate's Response The Directorate will build on and enhance the current partnerships that support students with learning difficulties particularly those across ACT Health and the Community Services Directorates.</p>	<p>Status: Ongoing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The implementation of National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) will lead to changes in the provision of therapy services for children and young people resident in the ACT with developmental delays and disabilities who are eligible to access the NDIS. These services will move to the non-government sector by December 2016. Assessment and referral services and supports for children and young people not eligible for the NDIS will remain the responsibility of the ACT Government. Therapist support for teachers to assist them to make adjustments to enable students with a disability to access and participate in their education program will also continue to be a mainstream service and the responsibility of the Education Directorate. ACT Government is working on a whole of government model for the provision of these mainstream services.

Taskforce Recommendation

Strategy 14. Promote the provision for adjustment to assessment tools (Board of Senior Secondary Studies, Australian Scaling test, NAPLAN) to parents, carers, students and staff.

Directorate's Response

The Directorate will promote the availability and nature of provision for adjustment to assessment tools for students with learning difficulties to parents, carers, students and staff.

Status: Ongoing

- A professional learning session regarding NAPLAN and the Board of Senior Secondary Studies (BSSS) adjustments was delivered to representative teachers in May which included processes for adjustments for students with learning difficulties.

ATTACHMENT 1: Learning Difficulties Professional Learning Implementation Plan TERMS 2 & 3 2014

TERM 2

<p>Phase 5: Supporting Schools with their implementation plan</p> <p>Audience: Representative Expert and School Psychologists</p> <p>Session Content:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brief introduction- ETD psychologist processes in schools for LD • Naplan adjustments • BSSS adjustments • Whole school plan example • Mapping out your implementation plan • LIFE page (resources) <p>Action Expression of interest from 2 schools to participate in pilot term study <i>Creating Inclusive and Accessible schools</i> and RTI</p>	<p>Phase 6: Learning difficulties strategies to be used- team or whole school approach (to compliment the LD handbook)</p> <p>Audience: Representative Expert</p> <p>Session Content: Overview of the Resource Kit, its purpose and content included.</p> <p>The purpose of the Resource Kit will come with accompanying CD and is designed to provide primary and secondary school teachers with insights, intervention strategies and practical teaching exercises for assisting students with learning difficulties.</p> <p>Each School Representative Teacher will receive the resource kit on the day</p>	<p>Phase 7: Learning Support Assistant (LSA) workshop- How to support students with Learning Difficulties with Karen Starkiss</p> <p>Audience: Learning Assistant Support (LSA)</p> <p>Session Content:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To be aware of signs and symptoms of specific learning difficulties in individuals • To increase confidence in the use of a range of strategies to support students in class and individually • To become familiar with ideas to help you support the teachers' classroom programme for students according to their identified needs • To be provided with ideas, activities and resources that will support the teachers' classroom intervention strategies for students with learning difficulties 	<p>Phase 8: Parent Workshop: supporting my child at home with Karen Starkiss</p> <p>Audience: Parents</p> <p>Session Content:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is dyslexia and what are the causes? • How to recognise the signs and symptoms of dyslexia in children • A dyslexic child's strengths and talents • What does it feel like to be dyslexic? Practical sessions to help parents understand their child's difficulties • How can you support your child at home and school? • Where to get advice and help • Useful websites and resources for children and their parents
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TERM 2 continued

<p>Phase 9: Learning Support Assistant: Using Inclusive technologies to support students with learning difficulties</p> <p>Audience: Learning Support Assistant (LSA)</p> <p>Session Content This hands-on iPad workshop will provide an opportunity to explore various apps & support tools proven to be effective in supporting students who are struggling with literacy in primary and secondary schools</p>	<p>Phase 10: Information Session for Principals & Deputy Principals: Whole School Approach to Learning Difficulties with Karen Starkiss</p> <p>Audience: Principals</p> <p>Session Content</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brain Research • What is dyslexia/LD and what are the causes? • Leading change - creating an inclusive and accessible school • Identifying individual learning styles and creating a multi-sensory environment • Meeting individual needs – how to put together individual programmes for students with LD 	<p>Phase 11: Early Childhood – Primary & Parents: Using inclusive technologies to support students in early years with learning difficulties</p> <p>Audience: Early Childhood-Primary Representative Teachers & Parents</p> <p>Session Content This hands-on iPad workshop will provide an opportunity to explore various early literacy apps and ways to effectively use the iPad in Early childhood and Primary years.</p>
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TERM 3

<p>Phase 12: Teacher Assessment Tools & Building a Community of Practice (CoP) for Learning Difficulties</p> <p>Audience: Representative Expert</p> <p>Session Content</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessment tools for teachers • Interactive session building community of learners, illustrations of interventions using LIFE page. • Whole school example Group Activity – what has worked, what data have you collected to measure success & what interventions did you put in place? How will this be sustainable in your school? • Mini media PL how to effectively collect data using iOS device to share at the conference 	<p>Phase 13: Learning Difficulties Conference 2014</p> <p>Audience: Representative Expert, Principals and Taskforce Panel Members</p> <p>Opening of day VIP Guest</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key note speaker • Taskforce Recommendation Report update • Launch of Handbook • LIFE page • Speakers (rep teachers)-share their journey <p>Group Activity (CoP)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share successes and challenges of your school implementation plan • Next Steps • Post a forum on the LIFE page • Complete final online Survey
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