

CASE STUDY - Embedding LLN in an NVQ for School Caretakers

This NVQ support programme is part of a wider project which aims to encourage those working in the cleaning and caretaking sectors into vocational training programmes. The learners were recruited from the education division of a local council and consisted of 68 school caretakers who embarked on an NVQ level 2 in caretaking.

"The vocational training was noticeably labour intensive, with much of the learning and assessment taking place on a simulated building site. This initially presented some hurdles for the LLN tutors who were unaccustomed to working in this way. Vocational tutors were also at first resistant to LLN tutors working alongside them as they felt that this might interfere with the vocational skills tuition and lengthen the learning process. These initial concerns proved to be unfounded with both vocational and LLN tutors learning from alternative teaching methods and teaching strategies and working together in a mutually supportive manner. The combined teaching approach seemed to benefit students, reflected in the extremely high level of retention and achievement of this group.

"Initial literacy and numeracy assessments provided the evidence that the vast majority of learners would benefit from support in both literacy and numeracy at Level 1. Joint programme planning between the vocational and LLN tutors helped to embed LLN skills into the NVQ programme without making the course any longer. The programme was re-written to incorporate LLN in a discreet and accessible manner, which would enable the simultaneous delivery of both LLN and vocational subject areas. For example, while the NVQ tutor supported learning in brickwork techniques, the LLN tutor taught how to use ratios and proportions when mixing sand and cement to make mortar. The joint planning process also helped vocational tutors to see that LLN skills went beyond their initial perceptions and also included for example being able to generate a report and articulate it to management, and compliance with health and safety regulations.

"The project outcomes surpassed expectations with all 68 participants achieving the NVQ Level 2. All participants were assessed as showing development in one or more LLN areas, with the majority on target to achieve one or more LLN qualifications. All participants surveyed on completion agreed that embedded programmes were a good way to gain awareness of and improve LLN skills. Many of the vocational tutors have taken up LLN skills training so they can provide some in-class support to students.

"On the down side, both joint curriculum development and the production of course materials are time consuming and can be costly, so they need to be properly funded."

Abridged and adapted from an original article by Deborah Lyndon-Butterworth ©The National Literacy Trust 2004