

Electronic Writing Guide

"Going to college was out of the question. How could I go when I can't spell. I wanted to write to Tony Blair to tell him that I'd re-write the English dictionary in a way that everyone could understand".

I recently met up with Duncan McGregor who attends the Bethany Hall in Leith as I'd heard he'd started using a piece of software called Read&Write Version 7.

I thought it would be interesting to hear his views on the software and during the short time he's been using it, how it has helped him to overcome difficulties with spelling and using a computer.

Duncan told me that as a Traveller, he'd never been to school in his life. Two years ago after battling with a drink problem he found himself at the Bethany Centre and it was there that he learnt to read. Whilst his reading was improving, Duncan felt that his spelling wasn't and he became increasingly frustrated as he felt his inability to spell was preventing him from doing other things such as using a computer or going to college.

Duncan is also very keen on writing poetry and whilst his head was full of ideas he had to rely on a scribe to put the words down on paper.

The turning point for Duncan came when Liz McHugh and Louise Clark of Bethany, visited CLAN's Resource Base to get advice and information on resources suitable for Bethany's learners. Among the items recommended to them to try out was Read&Write from textHELP.

Read&Write supports learners by predicting words as they type and reading back their writing. It is used with a standard word processor, such as Microsoft Word and appears as an additional toolbar.

Duncan said,

'I've been using the software for about three weeks. It was frustrating when I first started using it but I've now mastered the computer and my spelling's really improved. It teaches me as I go along and gives me a challenge'.

Duncan likes the fact that the software doesn't do all the work for him. He's learning new words all the time and feels he could now manage to do a college course.

'It's changed everything. It's opened up doors for me and I feel nothing's impossible now. The other day I wrote a poem myself and spelt every word right. I don't need someone else writing things up for me now'.

The software was reviewed in detail in the June issue of Beans and is available from the CLAN Resource Base.

FIONA HOLMES

*Does it rain in heaven,
yes, I'll tell you why,
the angels cry for me in gladness
when I finally die.*

*You think we'll never meet again
I'll tell you that's not true,
when time goes on and life has gone
you know I'll be with you.*

*When it rains in heaven
when it's time to die,
the rain that comes from heaven
is the teardrops when you cry.*

DUNCAN MCGREGOR



The forgotten strand

A NEW REPORT from the National Consumer Council states that the battle against health inequalities in the UK cannot hope to be won until the crucial issue of health literacy is addressed.

According to the report, health literacy is the 'forgotten strand' in making the UK's health services both more effective and more responsive to the needs of its users.

The report says that action from government and from health professionals across the board is needed to help build levels of health literacy, particularly among disadvantaged communities. People from disadvantaged communities are less likely to feel confident about asking their GP questions, less likely to read the information supplied with medicines and less likely to use the Internet to search for medical information. It says that more research is called for on the impact of poor health literacy on access to health care particularly among different groups.

Among the report's recommendations are

- the creation of a system of health literacy quality measures and standards, making health literacy an 'integral part' of the health care system
- the introduction of a mechanism to measure the impact of health information in supporting self-care.

Ed Mayo, NCC Chief Executive, said

"Building health literacy isn't only about changing the mindset of a population trapped by its respect for and deference to health professionals ... It also means a more user-focused approach from the NHS - making information available in plain language, when and how patients want it. Just as important is monitoring whether better, more consumer-focused information is having the desired impact on the ability of different groups to make the best choices and take control of their own health."

Improving the health of our communities through literacy

CLAN Edinburgh and Edinburgh Learning recently hosted a Health & Literacy conference at North Edinburgh Arts Centre for local practitioners and for members of Learning Communities Network in the UK.

The aim of the event was to highlight the work that is currently being undertaken by the CLAN Health & Literacy project in North Edinburgh.

Speakers included Councillor Ewan Aitken, Executive Member for Families and Children, Dr Ewan Crawford, Clinical Director of North West Edinburgh Local Healthcare Co-operative, NHS Lothian, Prue Pullen, Development Co-ordinator of Learning Connections and Elspeth Hosie and Jo Aitkenhead, CLAN Project Workers.

TrickTales theatre group provided a participatory form of theatre that raised awareness about the difficulties individuals with literacy needs might face. The audience were invited to change the outcome of the scenes for the better by shouting stop during repeat runs of the performance and offering alternative ways to play the scene.

Delegates were invited to take a tour of Pennywell Resource Centre, a base for Primary Healthcare staff and where Jo Aitkenhead and Elspeth Hosie are also based.

This was an opportunity to look at resources used by the Health and Literacy project and to meet other CLAN Project Workers and community workers involved in groups in North West Edinburgh.

There was also an opportunity to talk to Caroline McKenzie, a Health Visitor from Crewe Medical Centre, about the impact the project is having on meeting the needs of vulnerable learners.

Prathiba Hindocha, Director of Community Relations at Derby College, said of the event,

"A very informative, well organised and co-ordinated day. I certainly got a lot out of it. Sharing some of the work done at grassroots level and the impact it's having on strategy was a real good example of bottom up approach to learning. I am already talking to people in the community to identify gaps and linking with our Primary Care Trust and Basic Skills Department. An event of such calibre has given your community a national profile."

If you are interested in using forum theatre at an event contact Catriona MacInnes, Artistic Director of TrickTales.
Tel: 07941 670889. Email: catriona@uktheatre.net



New Programs

Kar2ouche

At the CLAN Resource Base, we have recently obtained a software program called Kar2ouche that is suitable for creative group and project work. The software enables users to create storyboards by selecting backgrounds, characters and props. You can add sound and text (via captions, speech and thought bubbles) to each frame. By rotating and moving characters and props and making sequences of frames, a short animation is created. Kar2ouche provides a varied and stimulating activity for integrating literacy and numeracy into adult learning. It could be used to create a lively opinion piece, illustrate a story, plan an event or a performance, explore interview skills, etc.

Making Dyslexia Work for You

This is a self-help guide and CD-ROM aimed at anyone who is, or thinks they might be, dyslexic. Described by the publishers as 'imaginative and bold', the book is designed to be straightforward and easy to dip into. It has an explanation of the nature of dyslexia; ideas for reading, writing, organisation, etc. and strategies that have been developed with dyslexic people. The CD-ROM provides the entire text as pdf files, so you can hear it read aloud if you have Adobe Acrobat Reader 6.0*. The material on the disc also extends the topics in the book and offers links to relevant web sites.

* Acrobat Reader is available to download free from the Web at www.adobe.com/products/acrobat/readermain.html
To start the Read Aloud feature, press CTRL, Shift + V to switch read aloud on and CTRL, Shift + E to turn it off.

FREE PRINTERS

Free Lexmark printers are still available from the CLAN Resource Base. For details contact Catherine Macrae. Tel: 0131 652 3938 or 0131 270 6034. Email: catherine@clanedinburgh.org or resources@clanedinburgh.org

Web Resources

Wacky Web Tales

To liven up learning about parts of speech, there is a web site called Wacky Web Tales.

It enables users to create a bizarre story by entering a list of specific kinds of words, e.g. a verb ending in -ing, a number, an adjective, a friend's name. The words are then reproduced within a bizarre (and hopefully amusing) story. There are instructions on how to create a story and a help page explaining parts of speech in a simple and clear way.

Although the site is geared to children, several of the themes for tales are suitable for adults, including The Day I Got Stuck on the Web, My Lucky Day, The Best Pet.

www.eduplace.com/tales/index.html

Poem Maker

Poem Maker works in a similar way. This is free software that can be downloaded from the Internet. Users create word lists consisting of nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs. The software then chooses words randomly from the lists and arranges them in phrases. The resulting poem can be edited to alter the phrase structure or word pattern.

Poem Maker provides a way for learners to research words and think about parts of speech. Although, as the Teachers' Notes put it, 'whether or not this is poetry is open to debate'.

www.mape.org.uk/activities

Beans' Web Sites

We are putting together a booklet of all the web sites we have described in Beans. We hope it will be available to download from the CLAN Resource Base web site soon. The Resource Base web site address is www.resources.clanedinburgh.org

In the meantime, if you would like us to send you a copy, please email the Resource Base: resources@clanedinburgh.org or phone us on 0131 652 3938.

Thur 28 October 10.30 am – 1.00 pm **Developing Writing**

Wed 10 November 5.00 – 7.30 pm **Desktop Publishing**

Thur 25 November 2.00 – 4.30 pm **Developing Writing**

Thur 9 December 10.30am – 1.00 pm **Desktop Publishing**

Wed 15 December 5.00 – 7.30 pm **Digital Cameras**

ICT Training

We still have some places available on our ICT training workshops. For more information please contact Catherine Macrae.
Tel: 0131 270 6034.

Email: catherine@clanedinburgh.org

Learners' Planning Meeting



"want to learn more...build up confidence...meet other people...get involved in the magazine...enjoyed the last event...to hear other people's stories...to see what it was all about" (LEARNERS' VOICES)

Thirty learners came together on Saturday 2 October to attend another successful planning meeting to take forward their ideas from the June event. The learners decided on the area they were interested in and joined one of the three groups.

Magazine Group

In the learners' magazine group, folk decided that the magazine could include poems, stories, reports on group visits, what's on and deaf needs and communication. The group are looking for more people to join who would be interested in organising and editing the magazine. Please ask learners if they are interested. For more information contact Claudia Esslinger. Tel: 0131 469 3000 (x4009). Email: claudia.esslinger@educ.edin.gov.uk

Xmas Party Group

The learners' event group were keen on having another whole day event and are getting their skates on to plan an exciting Christmas party! The party will be held on Saturday 11 December at St. Columba's by-the-Castle, 14 Johnston Terrace, Edinburgh. More information to follow.

Learning Stories Group

Finally, the learning stories group decided to work together on their ideas - to produce a book, video, CD and possibly use theatre - to record their achievements. Folk said this helps you feel more confident.

What next?

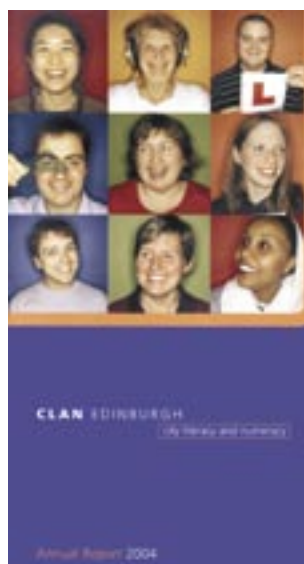
All groups agreed to meet again and get things moving. If you would like more information about the groups please get in touch with Lorraine Borwick. Tel: 0131 270 6072. Email: lorraine@clanedinburgh.org

Whose learning is it anyway?

Adult Education Policy, Practice and Provision:
Researching Learner/User Involvement in Edinburgh
Saturday 6 November, 9.30 am - 3.00 pm
Leith Academy, Academy Park (bottom of Easter Rd)
Speaker: Robin Harper MSP

This free seminar, organised by ALFiE (Adult Learners' Forum in Edinburgh), is aimed at learners, policy makers, adult education staff and providers. It will present the findings of the innovative research commissioned this year by ALFiE. The report will be available at the conference and participants will have opportunities to discuss the findings and conclusions.

A light lunch will be available. For more information and to book a place, contact ALFiE, c/o 88 Turnhouse Road, Edinburgh EH12 8ND. Tel: 0131 339 8475. Email: alfiforum@hotmail.com
Website: www.alfiforum.edin.org



CLAN's Annual Report

2003-04 has been a fast and furious year in literacy and numeracy. Gone are the old stories of "no funding", "few resources", "little interest" and "no political will" - replaced by £1m per year funding for literacy and numeracy in Edinburgh; an infrastructure of Partners, Project Workers, a few specialists, and a growing resource bank; growing interest and involvement of learners; and political drive from ministers.

All of us involved in this field have felt the twin pressures of responsibility and opportunity, but I believe that the report card for 2003-04 shows that on the whole both have been grasped. I would pay particular credit to Partners and Project Workers who have pioneered new and attractive provision, Funders with a light touch, the CLAN core team who have seized the moment and above all the learners who have taken the boldest step of all, to return to learning.

Angus Whyte

Copies of the report are available from the CLAN office. If you would like to receive a copy please contact Fiona Holmes (details below).

If you would like to contribute to future issues of 'Beans', please send your contribution to Fiona Holmes, CLAN Edinburgh, 1-3 Canon Street, Edinburgh EH3 5HE.
Tel: 0131 270 6073. Fax: 0131 270 6074.
Email: fiona@clanedinburgh.org
Web: www.clanedinburgh.org

More
Bytes