

LEARNING Buddies



For most of us the thought of standing up in front of a group of strangers and doing a 10 minute presentation is a daunting prospect, but for a group of CLAN adult literacy and numeracy learners, many of whom have

had to overcome personal difficulties and had very little confidence, this has become a regular part of their learning routine.

The 'Learning Buddies', as they call themselves, are current adult literacy and numeracy learners and came together through a joint initiative between CLAN and Clydesdale Bank.

The aim of the initiative is for the Learning Buddies to talk about their learning achievements (with particular reference to numeracy) to others in the hope that they will become inspired to take up learning themselves.

Nine learners are involved and they meet every Monday afternoon with Rosemary Byfield, the Learners' Development Worker.

So far the Learning Buddies have made presentations to a women's drop-in group in Craigmillar; Columille Day Centre (a centre for people with learning difficulties); an older people's group at Carr-Gom; Craighall Day Centre (a centre for disabled people); and a Befrienders group in Broomhouse. Further visits will be arranged so that 30 visits in total are undertaken by mid May.

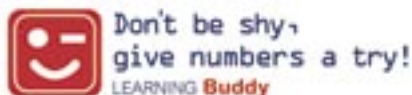
Learning Buddy, Pam, said, "Everyone in the group has now done their first talk and are glad it's over. We're now ready to do the other talks and our confidence is getting better".

The Learning Buddies decided to get involved with the project for various reasons. Pam felt it was her way of saying thanks for all the help she'd received. She'd like to become a literacy and numeracy tutor herself one day and is very keen to encourage others to take up learning.

For Jeanette, this was an opportunity to tell other people about the benefits learning can have on their lives and she wanted to show other people that it's not like school.



- Margo wanted to get across the point that learning brings you out of yourself and it's an opportunity to meet new people. Two years ago she couldn't have spoken to her next door neighbour let alone stand up in front of a group of strangers!
- Tanya who has learning difficulties has become more outgoing and assertive since doing the talks and Tam, who was adamant that he wasn't going to give a talk gave in when he was confronted by the enthusiasm of his peers and eventually did his first talk to a computer group at South Bridge Resource Centre.
- All the Learning Buddies agree that doing the talks has given them a lot of confidence and a belief in themselves.
- As they say, "It doesn't matter what age you are, or whether you have a disability you can do it. You're not alone when it comes to learning".
- The project will culminate in an event on Friday 27 May at McDonald Road Library to celebrate the achievements of the Learning Buddies who will give a presentation of their work and will receive awards for the contribution they have made to promote learning. Cllr Ewan Aitken, Executive Member for Children and Families, has agreed to take part in the event and Malcolm Chisholm MSP will present the awards.



Challenge Fund *update ... update ... update*

The final round of the Challenge Fund has been completed for the financial year 2004-05 with seven organisations: Workers' Educational Association (two); Adult Learning Project; Forth Sector; Four Square; Wester Hailes Youth Agency; Intowork - Bits & Bobs, and Donaldson's College receiving a total of £47,759 for eight projects aiming to work with 233 learners. Over the past financial year we have awarded a total of £149,985 for 26 projects aiming to recruit nearly 800 'hard to reach' learners and next year we hope to achieve even more.

The closing date for applications for the first application round in the coming financial year will be Friday 3 June.

There will be an applicants briefing session on Wednesday 11 May at 2.00pm at CLAN's Canon Mill offices for those who have not applied previously. Please note that this is compulsory and will explain the application procedure and offer advice to would-be applicants.

Please contact CLAN for more information or to book a place at the briefing on 0131 270 6071 or contact Richard Terry or Angus Whyte if you'd like to discuss any proposal you have. More information and an application form can be found on the CLAN website.



Lorna Hoy at the launch of the Playsacks Challenge Fund Project at Gilmerton Child & Family Centre.

WEBSITES LEARNING STYLES

All learners, especially those with dyslexia, will benefit from knowing how they prefer to learn and how to extend their learning strategies.

Popularly, three main learning styles are identified: through **seeing** things (visual), **hearing** them (auditory), or through the sense of **touch** or **body** movement (tactile/kinesthetic). There are other (complementary and more sophisticated models) and the web sites below provide a range of approaches. Most include an online tool to identify learners' preferred learning style and some have a useful explanation of the theories and advice for learners.

www.learning-styles-online.com

This site has an overview of learning styles based on 7 learning styles: visual, aural, verbal, physical, logical, social and solitary. It notes that traditional schooling has been based on logical and verbal styles and often labels those who use less favoured styles as 'poor learners'. The site offers a 70 question test and presents the results as a graphic.

www.vark-learn.com/english/index.asp

This site has a questionnaire with 13 multiple choice questions about responses to situations, plus help sheets with advice for learners based on their preferred learning style.

www.wou.edu/provost/aalc/learning/BarschLS_Inventory.html

This site uses a short 25 statement test to help students assess their learning style. It then has a set of tips for each type of learner and advice on the importance of broadening your range of preferred learning strategies.

www.chaminade.org/inspire/learnstl.htm

This site uses a simple chart to help learners determine their learning style; learners need to read the list of situations and then answer the questions to see how they would respond to each situation to identify themselves as primarily visual, auditory or kinesthetic learners.

www.ldpride.net/learning_style.html

This site which offers a learning styles quiz with 30 statements to judge yourself against on a 4 point scale: very little like me, a little like me; like me or a lot like me.

www.ldrc.ca/projects/miinventory/miinventory.php?eightstyles=1

These pages on the Eight Styles of Learning and Multiple Intelligence Inventory are part of an extensive site, provided by the Learning Disabilities Resource Centre. Here you will find lots of information and exercises to help learners become 'experts' on their own styles and abilities. You will need time to explore it. N.B. You need to register, but use of the site is free.

www.mathemagic.org/styles/index.html

This site uses the idea of learners as theorists, reflectors, pragmatists and activists. Using a simple cartoon style quiz, it identifies the respondent's preferred strategy and explains their characteristics and weaknesses. Although the cartoon style may not appeal to all, this quiz provides a light hearted means of introducing the idea of learning styles.

"Making the sacks has been a learning experience for all of us"



Playsacks @ Pennywell

The Playsacks group run by Playsacks Tutor Organiser, Fiona Manson, has been running on a weekly basis at Pennywell Resource Centre since July 2004. The learners were largely recruited from attending the baby clinic at Pennywell Resource Centre and are mainly parents of young children who have little or no further education, although two of the mums now work part-time.

The group has also attracted two learners who attend other groups in the area – a dad, and a mum who has English as a second language. Fiona feels that people were attracted to the group because they could come along with their children, whilst also engaging in learning.

From the outset the parent's are aware that the sacks are to encourage them to understand the importance of play and speaking and reading to their children. As there are written instructions included in all the sacks there is a lot of discussion around the words and sentences used in the instructions and a pictorial image is included so that parents' with limited literacy skills can still benefit from using the sacks.

The main focus of the group is to learn about child development and how encouraging play and development can help children to learn more easily when they start going to school. Through designing and making the sacks however the parents have learnt more about literacy and numeracy, computers, digital cameras, toy safety, sewing, budgeting, negotiation, planning, problem solving, group work and presentation skills.

Most of the members say that attending the group has given them more confidence to speak out in groups. Another said it had given her confidence to apply for a job (and get it!).

There is a general consensus that working on the sacks has increased people's confidence and skills and made them feel that they could work. As the sacks will be used as a community resource there have been comments about how much people have enjoyed doing something that will be of benefit to other parents and their local community.

As the tutor, Fiona has enjoyed watching the children and their parents develop and grow! As she says, *"Making the sacks has been a learning experience for all of us."*

For the future Fiona would like to:

- secure more funding to continue the group
- make sacks for 2-3 year olds
- plan the use of the sacks, i.e. how, where, when, etc
- publicise the project
- make a playsacks video
- do presentations to other groups
- cascade the learning to other groups

Fiona concludes,

"There is a huge amount of learning in making playsacks both for the existing group and for new groups. I very much hope that the experiences of the group will be utilised and developed and that funding can be found to continue the group and hopefully start a cascade of learning to other groups."



Learners' Barbecue

The planning group is organising a fun-packed Learners' Event on **Saturday 28 May, 2-4pm**, at St Columba's By-the-Castle, 14 Johnston Terrace (same place as the Xmas Party).

What's on offer at the B-B-Q?

Food • Quiz and prizes • Information and displays about what's on across Edinburgh, i.e. options for further learning • Presentation from Learning Buddies and display from the Mag Group • Graffiti wall • Oct2bus and crèche (places must be booked by Friday 20 May)

What can you do to help?

1. Tell learners about the event or even invite someone from the planning group to come along to your group!
2. Learners have mentioned that it's much easier to go along to an event with someone else. So perhaps you could chum them, meeting up beforehand and coming along together. (Project worker hours available)
3. Get in touch with Lorraine Borwick if you would like to provide information about what learning opportunities are on offer in your organisation.
4. Oct2bus! This is a colourful double-decker activity bus full of fun things to do for kids aged 2½ -12 years. It will be parked outside the church. There will also be crèche facilities for wee ones under 2½ years - but places must be booked in advance (by Friday 20 May).

Contact Lorraine at the CLAN office. Tel 0131 270 6072. Fax: 0131 270 6071. Email: lorraine@clanedinburgh.org

NEW BEAN

Sue Cameron recently took up the CLAN funded post of Literacy & Numeracy Worker in South West Edinburgh. Sue is based at Carrickvale Community Centre and is part of the South West Community Adult Learning Team within Community Education. Part of the post will be to develop literacy and numeracy activities for young people living in the area as well as supporting adult learners. Sue is keen to work in partnership with other agencies in the area.

Sue has been attending CLAN training courses : 'Getting Started in Adult Literacy and Numeracy' and 'Working in Groups with Adult Literacies Learners'. She found both courses very helpful and enjoyable, especially learning about different approaches to supporting learners and developing activities. She also found the opportunity to meet informally with other colleagues very useful.

You can contact Sue at Carrickvale Community Centre on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays. Tel: 0131 443 6971. Email: susan.cameron@educ.edin.gov.uk

Handwriting Kit

CLAN Resource Base has put together a handwriting kit of around twenty pens. The kit is intended to be useful to learners working on handwriting skills who will often find that a different pen makes it easier to change their style and write more clearly. To borrow this resource or find out more about working on handwriting, drop into the Resource Base or phone 0131 652 3938 or email resources@clanedinburgh.org

More Bytes

The next edition of Beans will be out in May. If you would like to contribute, send your items 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



Staff of MacVitties Guest, Comiston Road, Edinburgh, 1920.

The Living Memory Association training is designed to help anyone who wants to work in reminiscence. It helps to develop groupwork skills and suggests creative activities and how to use resources.

The LMA has organised one-day training events on reminiscence work on the following Fridays: 13, 20 and 27 May. Each event will be held at The LMA, 101 St Leonard's Street, Edinburgh, 10.00am-3.00pm. The cost is £45 organisations/£25 concessions. Lunch is provided. For more details or to book a place contact John McCaughie on 0131 667 0761 or email john@livingmemory.org.uk

www.livingmemory.org.uk