



# The Literacy and Dyslexia-SpLD Professional Development Framework: User's Guide

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# 1. Introduction to the Framework

The Professional Development Framework is a free web-based tool accessible to all. It is a self-assessment tool that provides the user with a full personalised report based on a 'gap-analysis' of their confidence in key areas related to dyslexia and Specific Learning Difficulties [SpLD]. This report defines the levels of additional knowledge, skills and professional attributes that are required to fulfil relevant job roles in the school and educational workforce to support literacy acquisition and dyslexic-SpLD learners effectively. It offers suggestions for next steps in CPD, including key reference texts and research literature; work-place activities; teaching resources; web-based resources and other professional development materials.

The framework is divided into six strands:

- Development of language and literacy
- Theories of dyslexia-SpLD
- Identifying and assessing dyslexia-SpLD
- Supporting and teaching learners with dyslexia-SpLD
- Communicating and working with others
- Professional development and dyslexia-SpLD

Each strand is further divided into the following Stages and corresponding roles:

Stages	Type of Support	Professional Roles
Stage 1	Universal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All staff teaching and supporting learners in all levels of educational setting</li> </ul>
Stage 2	Targeted	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Practitioners confident with planning, preparing and teaching with a range of targeted specialist and differentiated resources.</li> <li>• Practitioners in specialist settings</li> </ul>
Stage 3	Targeted Strategic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Higher Level Teaching/Special Assistant in all settings</li> <li>• SEN Teacher</li> <li>• SENCo</li> <li>• Teacher in main stream seeking to specialise in dyslexia/SpLD</li> <li>• CPD leader for teaching schools</li> </ul>
Stage 4	Specialist	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dyslexia/SpLD Specialist Teacher</li> <li>• Dyslexia/SpLD Advisory Teacher</li> <li>• Specialist Teacher Assessor</li> </ul>
Stage 5*	Specialist Complex	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Specialist Teacher Assessor</li> <li>• Dyslexia/SpLD Advisor</li> <li>• Dyslexia/SpLD Trainer</li> </ul>

\* Teachers working at this level would be expected to be qualified to undertake full cognitive diagnostic assessments for dyslexia-SpLD.

The framework maps onto relevant professional development frameworks, thus enabling it to inform senior management teams within schools on competencies and qualifications required by existing staff and for recruitment purposes. The ultimate goal is for the framework to provide a starting point for strategic decision-making which will have a positive impact across schools and other learning environments improving the outcomes for dyslexic–SpLD learners.

The framework is designed for:

- Head Teachers, College and School Leaders
- SENCOs
- Literacy and SEN Specialists
- CPD leaders
- Class teachers and TAs
- School Governors
- Course providers
- LA advisers
- Policy makers

The Framework is evidence-based, created by experts and stakeholders in the Dyslexia-SpLD field. The work was funded by the DfE as a response to the Rose Review “Identifying and Teaching Children and Young People with Dyslexia and Literacy Difficulties” June 2009. It has been carried out by the Dyslexia-SpLD Trust under co-direction of PATOSS and Dyslexia Action and in collaboration with a wide range of stakeholders across the profession.

The purpose of the Framework is to:

- raise knowledge and expertise of staff
- support institutional improvement and strategic plans
- help schools to meet OFSTED requirements
- provide information and resources for focused, cost and time effective CPD across the workforce resulting in the capacity to improve learning experiences and outcomes for the Dyslexic-SpLD learners and their parents.

## 2. Using the Framework

### 2.1 Using the Framework within school as a basis for team-based professional development

The framework can be used to structure whole school improvement plans or departmental continuous professional development targets in respect of dyslexia-SpLD. Case studies of individual schools' usage will become available after the implementation period, taking place in the Academic Year 2011-12.

#### **Whole Team Discussion**

One suggestion is to use the framework as the starting point for a whole team discussion about relevant skills and attributes. Subsequently, the printed report on the team's strengths and weaknesses operates as a structure to plan departmental or school CPD over the course of the next one to three years.

The framework would need to be projected onto a screen visible to all and at least an hour set aside to enable team debate on each statement within the selected strand. The Literacy and Dyslexia-SpLD framework can then be completed, in the group, as the whole team assesses its collective expertise in supporting the learner with literacy difficulties including dyslexia-SpLD. The team leader should also keep a note of 'vulnerable expertise', whereby the team currently has a high level of expertise in a certain area, but this is not shared by most of the team and therefore could be lost if those staff members leave. Such vulnerability could be tackled by selecting a lower confidence band, which would enable the team to diversify its knowledge base.

The six strands of the framework identify core areas of knowledge. The activity of discussing each of these strands is likely to broaden team awareness of the range of skills, knowledge and attributes required for successful teaching practice.

#### **Building on Recommendations**

When the report has been compiled and printed, recommendations will be given. The next step is to identify which individuals will take part in which activity and when their learning will be disseminated back to the team. Some activities are easily accessed as a whole team, such as a video clip, which can be used in subsequent team meetings as part of a discussion. Other workplace activities might include a pair of teachers reading a key document or piece of research and then presenting this back as part of a team briefing.

The report can also be used to guide more formal CPD choices and indicate which individuals would derive and deliver the greatest benefit from available options. Moreover, such decisions can be made within the context of 'highest need' as identified by the report. When considering strategic direction, such as a School Improvement Plan, the report could be used to structure future plans and aspirations

in the context of appropriately trained staff in the field of dyslexia-SpLD. It has the added benefit that, because it distils current knowledge as derived from key Stakeholders in this area, it provides an evidence-based structure on which to build future plans.

## 2.2 Using the framework as an individual

The framework can be used individually to assess a teacher's confidence in each of the six themes, analyse their profile and recommend 'next steps' for their continuing professional development. This could be used to guide future course choices or suggest easily accessible materials and work-place activities to strengthen teaching practice.

The individual teacher may find it more productive to build their professional development as part of a whole-school context. Thus the final report might be used as part of an overall strategy to improve provision for dyslexic-SpLD learners throughout the school (see section above). Many of the workplace activities encourage collaboration with colleagues and thus provide the individual teacher with an opportunity to increase their impact on the school environment.

Some suggestions for the individual teacher include using the report:

- as a document for the teacher's annual appraisal/performance review to structure the following year's CPD needs
- to contribute to the evidence needed for keeping effective records of informal CPD, such as the Teaching Portfolio or the Institute for Learning's REfLECT system, available on <http://www.ifl.ac.uk/cpd/reflect> .
- as a multi-sensory resource pack
- to mentor or support colleagues through suggested work-place activities
- to reassess individual competencies after undertaking a selection of CPD activities

The Framework provides an evidence-based overview of relevant knowledge available at any time for the individual to update their skills.

## 2.3 Using the framework as a teaching school or as a lead school in a cluster

The framework is a distillation of agreed knowledge, skills and competencies derived from key Stakeholders in the field of dyslexia-SpLD. This unifies a large number of diverse strands into one coherent package, enabling the lead school to disseminate its expertise within a consistent and evidence-based framework. Case-studies are

currently underway, focusing on 'Evidence of Impact' in terms of CPD. Possible uses include:

- As an initial needs analysis tool to identify individual schools' requirements for the creation of bespoke training programmes in Literacy and Dyslexia/SpLD.
- To support initial teacher training programmes and programmes for NQTs.
- To structure dialogue about literacy in a twilight session for teachers and TAs (see part 2.1 'Using the framework within school as a basis for team-based professional development').
- As a guide to structure long-term planning for tailored professional development for individuals or schools.
- To assist in planning Action Research in Literacy support.

The framework could also be used to stimulate dialogue amongst representatives from a group of schools, outlining the key themes essential for excellent provision and enabling team leaders to plan the type of support required from the lead school, from the more knowledgeable basis of 'knowing what they don't know'.

## 2.4 Using the framework as a training provider of formal SpLD courses

The framework can be used to assess the depth and breadth of courses and training provision for dyslexia-SpLD qualifications. Using the template showing learning outcomes mapped onto each competency statement, a course provider may use the framework as a benchmark against which to assess the quality of provision currently being offered.

As part of the implementation phase in the Academic Year 2011-12, case studies will be derived to explore the various ways in which training providers find use of the framework to be most helpful. Another possibility is to use the framework for individuals before and after the course as a base-line measurement of learning outcomes.

Researchers and designers of new courses could use the framework to identify typical gaps in knowledge of a prospective target group of students. This would enable new course design to target specifically the gaps in knowledge of provision as identified by the framework.

### 3. A note on Action Research

Even the best CPD can only be as good as its sustainable impact on practice. Action Research, in its simplest form, occurs when a teacher identifies a strategy that he or she wishes to try in their own unique context, using reflection and observation to record effects on their learners, themselves and their colleagues. These reflections help to modify strategies, leading to an environment of continually evolving practice. A number of the activities suggested in the personalised report include elements of Action Research.

#### **Base-line measurements**

Base-line measurements can be very effective at noticing and recording change yet need not be complex. Gathering these at the beginning of your activity will provide useful evidence of impact. The following are some examples of everyday events that can operate as baseline measures if identified as such and recorded.

#### ***From everyday events:***

- *Teachers' perceptions:* This can include generalised perceptions on overall lesson success, learner engagement and learning outcomes. A valuable measure is recording teacher levels of post-lesson satisfaction. A simple, consistent recording method needs to be found, such as a field-diary or teaching journal or a 'rating scale' with notes. Teacher perceptions would also be used to evaluate some of the more specific suggestions below.
- *Reading for Meaning:* This could include comprehension tasks, although this activity consists of a number of complex processes which could obscure early signs of progress in some learners. Engaging in the reading process and eliciting understanding through questioning and discussion can provide an insight into early improvements in dyslexia-SpLD.
- *Free Writing:* A number of different skills can be quickly assessed, including spelling; handwriting and letter formation; concentration; motivation; creativity; sequencing of ideas; quantity of writing; originality of ideas; flow of plot and overall presentation. The Action Researcher should select perhaps 2 or 3 themes only, in order to simplify the recording process.
- *Story Telling:* This can be an excellent way to assess a number of skills without going through the medium of writing, which can be a significant barrier for many learners. Confidence, sequencing, vocabulary retrieval, integration of experiences and learning, assessing ideas for relevance and generating descriptive colour are all examples of story-telling skills.

- *Engagement in on-task discussion:* This can be an indicator of classroom strategies which are engaging and stimulating a learner, thus reducing unwanted classroom behaviour.

**Longer term formal measures:**

- *Longer term measures:* National Strategy levels and formal or examined assessments are measurements that show impact over time. They are therefore particularly useful when assessing the impact of a strategy that has become embedded in practice.

Although Action Research can be undertaken by the individual, all inquiry is strengthened by dialogue amongst colleagues. Joining other team members in their exploration of effective strategies for supporting the Dyslexic-SpLD learner is perhaps the most powerful way of embedding excellent practice within each unique environment.

## 4. Concluding comments

The Literacy and Dyslexia-SpLD Professional Development Framework is ultimately a springboard. It acts as a focus for professional development of those individuals and organisations interested in continually improving provision for the dyslexic-SpLD learner and boosting literacy outcomes. It can identify strengths, themes for training and areas for growth. Perhaps even more importantly, it can act as a stimulant to discussion and dialogue amongst colleagues.

As part of the implementation period over this Academic Year (2011-12), this dialogue can also contribute to our understanding of the framework's use in a variety of contexts. Whether as an individual; part of a school team; a lead school or training provider, we would very much like to hear about your experiences, particularly the impact the framework has had on achieving your CPD needs and its effects on improving the provision for your dyslexic-SpLD learners.

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The framework can be accessed on The Dyslexia-SpLD Trust website:

<http://framework.thedyslexia-spldtrust.org.uk>