**Guide- Embedding English, maths and digital skills**

**Does your teaching promote development of maths English and digital skills?**

All good teaching already involves maths, English and digital skills in some way; it’s just a matter of recording it in the planning documentation and highlighting to the learners when they are covering these skills. Learners need to see the bigger picture – how their learning links to other areas of the course or situations.

Here are a few examples to help you to embed these three core skills into your sessions:

* It is all in the planning. When designing the course scheme of work and session plans, make sure you identify where maths, English and digital skills can be supported, monitored and contextualised.
* Use a maths or English game to kick-start the session and get learners interact early. This is especially important if you are going to be using specific maths and English skills in your session’s learning tasks and assessment.
* Always mark learners’ work effectively and provide them with feedback on how well they are developing their maths and English skills.
* Always make maths and English applicable and relevant to your session’s learning outcomes. If it doesn’t make sense, then students will not engage with the activity.
* Know your learners – challenge common misconceptions and praise improvement in vocabulary, reasoning and their use of logic.
* Provide learners with useful apps they can download on their phones that help with different day to day needs such as checking grammar and spelling, looking at the weather forecast or calculate personal/family budgeting.
* Provide learners with useful website addresses they can access from home to help improve their subject knowledge and their general knowledge.
* Point out to learners when and how they are practising/developing their maths and English skills in every session.
* Encourage learners to set SMART personal targets to help them improve their maths, English and digital skills; for example ‘ by the end of the course I will be able to list 5 aspects of a mortgage application’ or ‘by the end of the course I will be able to download an app which provides hourly and daily weather forecasts.
* Set homework that involves developing learners’ maths and English.
* Get learners to practise/develop their maths and English vocabulary in every session and record and spell new terms and definitions in a key words sheet (and example of this is available on Cheshire Adult learning portal - resources section)

**Initial and Diagnostic Assessments**

* Initial assessment: finding out about the learner as an individual.
* Diagnostic assessment: finding out their current level of skills, knowledge and understanding towards a particular subject.

**Initial assessments**

used to help you to find out about your learners as individuals, and to identify any particular aspects which might otherwise go unnoticed. It's best to do this prior to the programme commencing. This will allow time to deal with any issues that might arise, or to guide learners to a different, more appropriate programme if necessary.

**Initial assessment can:**

* allow for differentiation and individual requirements to be planned for and met
* ascertain why your learner wants to take the programme along with their capability to achieve
* find out the expectations and motivations of your learner
* give your learner the confidence to negotiate suitable targets
* identify any information which needs to be shared with colleagues
* identify any specific additional support needs

**Diagnostic assessment**

used to evaluate a learner's skills, knowledge, strengths and areas for development in a particular subject area. The results will give a thorough indication of not only the level at which your learner needs to be placed for their subject, but also which specific aspects they need to improve on. Skills tests can be used for learners to demonstrate what they can do, whereas knowledge tests can be used for learners to demonstrate what they know and understand.

Diagnostic tests can also be used to ascertain information regarding English, maths, and information and communication technology (ICT) skills. Information gained from the results of these tests will help you plan to meet any individual needs and/or to arrange further training and support if necessary. Diagnostic assessments can be used as part of the information, advice and guidance (IAG) service if applicable at your organisation.

**Diagnostic assessment can:**

* ascertain learning preferences e.g. visual, aural, read/write and kinaesthetic (VARK)
* enable learners to demonstrate their current level of skills, knowledge and understanding
* ensure learners can access appropriate support
* identify an appropriate starting point and level for each learner
* identify gaps in skills, knowledge and understanding to highlight areas to work on
* identify previous experience, knowledge, achievements and transferable skills
* identify specific requirements: for example, English, maths and ICT skills

There's no point using a test if you are not going to analyse and use the results to good effect.

The results of initial and diagnostic assessments should help you negotiate appropriate individual training and assessment plans, or action plans, with your learners. This should ensure they are on the right programme at the right level with the right support they need to succeed.

**Recommended Websites:**

* [**Basic Key Skills Builder**](http://www.bksb.co.uk/)
* [**Diagnostic assessment resources**](http://www.excellencegateway.org.uk/search?content=diagnostic+assessment&sort_bef_combine=score+DESC&sort_bef_combine=score+DESC&=Search)
* [**Initial assessment resources**](http://www.excellencegateway.org.uk/search?content=initial+assessment&=Search)
* [**Initial assessments for Functional Skills English and maths**](http://qualifications.pearson.com/en/qualifications/edexcel-functional-skills/teaching-support/initial-assessment-tool.html)
* [**Initial assessments for ICT**](http://www.tes.co.uk/teaching-resource/ict-initial-assessments-6177727)
* [**Learning preferences**](http://www.vark-learn.com/)
* [**Numeracy diagnostic assessment materials**](http://rwp.excellencegateway.org.uk/Diagnostic%20Assessment/Numeracy/)
* [**Training needs analysis**](http://www.businessballs.com/trainingneedsanalysis.pdf)

***From*** [***Ann Gravells***](https://twitter.com/anngravells)***who is an author, creator of teacher training resources and an education consultant***