

Learner Support Strategies



LEARNER PROFILER & IDENTIFYING AREAS OF SUPPORT

Learner profiler assesses individuals on various modules of assessment and clearly indicates a learner's strengths and weaknesses. Learner Profiler assesses a learner's Literacy and Numeracy abilities, but it goes beyond that as well. Barriers to learning stem from contextual disadvantages, social issues, learning difficulties and disabilities and Learner Profiler ensures that all of these categories are taken into account when assessing a learner. It is of vital importance to complete the registration module where the learner answers questions about themselves, as it is these questions that give the assessor and teacher insight into the learner's background and life experiences. The "How I Learn" module is just as important as it gives insight into the learner's understanding of their own learning. Learner Profiler incorporates the individual's particulars, the curriculum, the learning environment, the home situation as well as the local community. These factors play an important role in a learner experiencing barriers to learning as one or more of these factors are often the barrier themselves. You cannot expect to get a solid understanding of an individual's ability without knowing who they are!

However, some learners do not answer all of the questions honestly. This may be due to fear of getting themselves or their parents in trouble. For example, one young learner stated that her parents did not drink, not even on special occasions. It is suspected that this young learner has FAS, and during the consultation with her class teacher it emerged that her parents are extremely heavy drinkers. Learner Profiler is not a "one man show", and if we are to get a true reflection of a learner, it involves all parties concerned.

The online assessment provides teacher's with a framework to identify areas of support needed for the individual learner and their specific needs. It is a lot easier to implement support strategies if you know the life experiences and background of the individual you are trying to assist.

Our school has used the Learner Profiler reports in conjunction with analysing the learner's responses to identify the specific support needed. Below are interesting cases on how we have identified the support needed for an individual learner. Please note, that the names and ID numbers of the learners have been changed and do not reflect an actual learner at our school.

Name & Surname: Jason [REDACTED]

ID Number: 09 [REDACTED]

Date of birth: 14.07.2009

Age: 7

Grade: 1

Background Information: Jason's class teacher explained that she was concerned and worried that he was not able to spell words correctly and this had a negative impact on his ability to read and write. Jason is well behaved in the classroom and follows instructions. He enjoys working with visual aids and performs better when he is getting individual assistance from the teacher.

Learner Profiler findings

Learner Profiler identified that Jason was able to recognise rhyming words said out aloud. He presented no difficulties with regards to sound discrimination. He was able to distinguish between two or more sounds. Basic literacy awareness is not an issue for Jason. The letter typing assessment showed that Jason was able to recognise the letter sounds (phoneme) from the alphabet. He did

well in this assessment module. Jason was able to distinguish between words that were the same or different when they were displayed in different fonts. Listening vocabulary presented no problem areas.

Learner Profiler did not identify any problematic areas within the following areas:

- Attention and concentration skills
- Social and communication skills
- Co-ordination and organisational skills

Learner Profiler did identify an area of weakness with regards to Jason's Literacy skills in the "How I learn" questionnaire. Jason has difficulties with reading and this could be due to one of the following factors:

- Difficulty storing the written word in the brain.
- Difficulty in concentrating when reading written work.
- 'Phonological analysis' skill – Sounding out words and de-coding them into parts.
- Difficulties organising his thoughts and getting them onto paper.

Jason did not complete all of the assessment modules. When we attempted the spelling module Jason became nervous and was not able to complete the task. He was asked to write a three letter word down on a piece of paper and he was not able to do so. He explained that he could not spell or read and he would not benefit from continuing with an assessment module that is above his ability level.

Interpretation of findings

Learner Profiler identified a number of strengths in Jason's ability. The most interesting fact is that he has a solid understanding of all the singular sounds. Many people may presume that by having an understanding of the sound / letter relationship, spelling and reading should come easily. It was evident that Jason has a problem with blending the sounds together to form a word and decoding a word into its sounds in order to read it. For example, this was made clear when asked to spell a word like "cat". Jason knows the sound and letter of the c, a and t, but he is unable to blend them together to write the word "cat".

Blending involves the use of phonemic awareness skills and is very important as it enables a learner to mentally blend speech sounds together to form a word. Learners who experience difficulties with blending phonemes to form a word, often lack phonemic awareness skills. Blending also involves retaining the sound in the mind, while the word is formed.

Jason battles blending speech sounds (phonemes) to form a word and needs support within the classroom setting.

Support strategies

Jason's difficulty to blend the sounds together to form a word reflects a lack of phonemic awareness. His phonemic awareness can be strengthened by incorporating simple activities into the daily teaching time.

1. **The "Take Away" Game**

The take away game involves learners saying a word and then taking a sound away from the word. For example, "Say the word run" The learner repeats the word run. "Now say it without the r sound" (un). "Now say the word hot and then say the word hot without the h

sound" (ot). Say "mat". Say it again without the "m" (at).

2. **Blending game**

Say the word 'sun' very slowly and hold each sound for two to three seconds so that the word is said as follows: sssssuuuuuunnnnn. The learner must listen to the sounds and blend them together in his or her head. They must determine what the word is and say it out aloud. Do this with many different words.

3. **Visual support**

Say the word "hop" and say it slowly holding each sound for a second or two "hhhhooooopppp" and point to the letters h, o and p as it is being said. The letters will provide visual support for the learner.

4. **Kinaesthetic support**

Some learners may benefit from kinaesthetic support when learning blending skills. Say the word "pan" and drive a car over the letters on the alphabet chart. Once the corresponding letters being p, a and n are identified correctly, write the word pan in the sand with your finger. Trace the word "pan" with your finger on a piece of sandpaper.

- Use a multisensory approach to improving phonemic awareness skills.
- Show a word for a short period of time and ask the learner to recall the letter sequence.
- Play bingo or snap with word / picture associations.
- Praise success as positive feelings rejuvenate and motivate our learners.

Learner Profiler unlocks a source of unlimited potential within each of us. It assesses our learners and gives thorough feedback in the form of a report. Areas of weakness are identified and the information is interpreted. Support strategies are implemented and the learner's progress is monitored. Learner Profiler is an effective, user friendly and accurate online assessment programme that has the ability to change the lives of our young learners if used correctly!