

**PMILD****LINK**

*The Bulletin of News and Information for Everyone Working with  
People with Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties*

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*PMLD LINK relies on contributions from practitioners, parents,  
carers and everyone interested in this field*

*'But if I hold his hand and make him do it, isn't it then my work, not his?'....'She's just so limited in what she can do for herself...'* These comments are typical of remarks often made to me by well-intentioned teachers of pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD), when referring to working in the arts. What is usually apparent, is the belief nonetheless, that arts experiences are somehow 'good' for them. What is also clear, is a sense of frustration over their children's perceived limitations, and that perhaps there is a magic answer, somehow for overcoming these and opening up an 'Aladdin's cave' of possibilities. However, teachers in *all* phases of education (mainstream as well as special education), experience a similar tension to a greater or lesser degree. Namely, the perceived difficulty of giving 'ownership' of work in the arts to the children. At what point though, is teacher deemed to have hi-jacked the creative process, when working with pupils with PMLD? How can such pupils be empowered to take control in the arts? How can they too be enabled to progress in the arts - and to what end?

### The Arts in a state?

Cahill (1992) highlights four widely acknowledged claims for the arts in meeting SEN. Are these valid for those pupils with PMLD? Firstly, the arts recognise *individual achievement*, through their concern with individual qualities, abilities and perceptions. However, it is all-too-easy to fall into one of two traps: either regarding every 'statement' by children with PMLD as 'wonderful', or else as 'limited' in comparison with their more able peers. Recognising achievement in the arts begs an understanding by the teacher, of the significance of *all* pupils' endeavours towards their overall development. It comes down to questioning the value of children's efforts relative to their ability and to previous endeavours, grounded in a secure knowledge base of child development in the arts. It calls into question the notion of what constitutes 'good' work in the arts - one's personal preferences perhaps, over abstract or naturalistic/representational work. Both of course, are equally valid, and educators have an obligation to facilitate children's development in both types of artistic endeavour. Furthermore, it challenges assumptions, as to what actually constitutes progress in the arts. 'Progress' is not just being able to do things that are increasingly complex: it is also being able to do the same thing but 'better' - more independently, perhaps....or the same thing, but with greater understanding and confidence (Peter, 1995, 1996a and b; Wills and Peter, 1996). This has huge implications for planning arts experiences for those pupils with PMLD, who may remain for a very long time within a stage of development.

Secondly, the arts present a wide range of opportunities potentially, for children to *express themselves and communicate* - to succeed in different media, and develop skills in motivating and meaningful contexts. There are two aspects here: one is the arts a means for children to let out feelings, responses; the other implies the arts as a means to convey ideas, thoughts and emotions to others. To be able to use the arts as a means of personal expression, children need opportunities to develop their skills in a range of media, and to be able to organise their actions to achieve particular outcomes. All children need to develop their understanding and use of the elements of music, dance, art and drama - these are the *means* by which 'shared meanings' may be created - the development of symbolism and making representations that carry significance. In order to communicate to others, this requires an understanding of how the arts may be used with intentionality to make a statement - implicit is a consolidated understanding of 'self' compared to 'others'; much groundwork may be required with pupils with PMLD. However, as with concepts of 'reading readiness', it is not the case that 'I'll give you a pencil when you've learned to draw', or 'you can do dance when you've learned to move'.... Rather, the approach at all levels of ability has to be 'learning how to do it whilst doing it'.

Thirdly, the arts contribute to children's *social education*, by fostering collaboration with other children and adults; they enhance the 'social health' of the group through positive regard for individual endeavour, and also offer access and insight into our cultural heritage. For example, the DES (1992) acknowledges the value of dance in contributing to the development of pupils' self-reliance, self-discipline, resourcefulness, co-operation with others, reappraising personal attitudes, values and beliefs, and sensitivity to others' needs and opinions. These may sound somewhat high-faluting at first, in relation to many pupils with PMLD. However, at very least, the arts as a group experience, offer children opportunities in which to develop a consolidated concept of 'others' in relation to 'self'. This cannot emerge in a vacuum - we have

to create social contexts in which the child may make such conceptual leaps. The presence of children with PMLD cannot be gratuitous however within the group: rather, relating to others must be meaningful, pertinent, relevant. This requires active engagement by the child, through the teacher constructing appropriate points of access to sharing collective meanings - differentiation of arts activities, in other words. Bunching children together essentially to work at their own tasks alongside one another, is selling short the group experience; teachers have to create opportunities for genuine, purposeful interaction.

Fourthly, the arts promote the development of *self-confidence* and the raising of self-esteem, by providing avenues for achievement other than in 'core' learning areas, by offering non-judgemental contexts in which there may be no 'right or wrong', and by encouraging positive attitudes to oneself and others. However, it is relatively easy to trot out phrases such as 'self-worth', 'self-esteem'...but what are the indicators of this? And how does this translate for those pupils with PMLD? It is not a matter of fostering an artificial 'feel good' factor, by praising children indiscriminately to the hilt, or by setting unchallenging tasks to ensure they succeed. What we are really talking about, is the development of children's personal powers, and their awareness, understanding, realisation of themselves as active agents: children taking responsibility for their own learning, in other words. Empowerment in the arts involves two aspects: developing children's ability firstly, to understand and use the elements of the particular arts practice in question, in order to achieve a desired outcome; secondly, to use this to influence others - knowing how their artistic 'statement' will be understood and interpreted. Is this an utterly fanciful notion in relation to those children with PMLD? To what extent is it possible to empower pupils with PMLD to take control of the creative process?

#### Re-stating the Arts

Arts education is concerned with developing pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding of the way 'shared meanings' may be created. In all areas of the arts, this entails a grasp of how the *elements* may be harnessed and used in combination for some expressive and communicative intent. This developing awareness needs to be reinforced in opportunities for children to engage in all aspects of work in the arts: *arts making*, *arts appreciation*, and *arts composition*. The elements of Art and Music conveniently are listed within current National Curriculum documentation (DFE, 1995a and c): pattern and texture, colour, line and tone, and shape, form and space in Art; timbre, texture, duration (pulse or beat and rhythm), dynamics, tempo, pitch and structure in Music. The elements of Dance are no longer explicitly stated (refer to previous documentation - DES, 1992), but fortunately are not mystifying to the generalist teacher: simply ask 'what' is moving (the body, and type of action), 'where' (use of space), 'how' (dynamics - quality of movement) and 'with whom or what' (relationships with other dancers or objects)? Planning work in the arts at all levels of ability, should be driven by children's developing needs in respect of these arts elements, weighted particularly towards their *arts making*. For pupils with PMLD in particular, work in the arts needs to be very focused: which element is being pointed up in the lesson in question?

Using a stimulus may help to make the element in question accessible, when introducing the theme for a lesson to children. A stimulus may also suggest fresh contexts to the teacher, in which to revisit the same teaching content - the theme for the children and the theme for the teacher! For example, a toy top may help to set the movement theme of the action 'spinning', with contrasts in speed to give quality to the experience - what movement activities could the children experience, in order to explore 'spinning' in depth?....Rotating hands and feet with adult support as necessary; spinning on bottoms (adult supporting by sitting behind the child, and using the thighs to aid propulsion); being spun on a blanket on the floor, and above the ground; spinning with a peer; being spun in their wheelchairs, tracing spiralling patterns, etc....This may be developed into a 'spinning top' dance, performed solo, or maybe alongside one another (two or three at a time)? In the previous 'exploration' section of the lesson, did the child show a preferred way of spinning? This may be interpreted on behalf of the child, as the basis of the child's choice, and form the content of his or her 'spinning top dance': adopting a clear starting position (supporting adults reinforcing and augmenting the shape of the child's body), then performing the chosen spin getting faster then slower, perhaps to percussion accompaniment, accelerating and decelerating, with a clear finishing position.

It is the curricular entitlement of pupils with PMLD, to have access to their cultural heritage through the works of other artists in a way that is relevant and meaningful, and which may inspire and inform their own

For example, given the complete range of colours, everything on the paper risks going a muddy brown - the developmentally young child is not actually being empowered to develop their control over colour at all. Instead, consider at first giving the child just one, or at most two, primary colours (red, blue or yellow), so that accidental mixes occur on the paper...What happens if blobs of white are introduced?...Does the child notice? How can s/he be enabled to notice? Does s/he notice on a subsequent occasion when the activity is repeated? Does s/he begin to poke at colours to blend them? How much assistance is required for the child to achieve this? Does s/he need less assistance on a subsequent occasion? If the child is then presented with a different colour, and white is introduced, does s/he transfer to this new context his or her previous understanding of creating crude tones (shades of light and dark), and the skill to achieve this? On a further occasion, if certain colours are with-held, does the child actively seek a second colour to blend with the first? Over time, as the child acquires increasing control over how colours behave, so additional colours may be introduced, thus gradually broadening the child's 'palette'.

Work in the arts takes effort - it also takes time. If children with PMLD are to be enabled to be truly creative, then time has to be made available, with sufficient staff support. Of course this will have implications for classroom management, and timetabling. However, the arts offer valuable opportunities to work in a cross-curricular way - exploiting natural curriculum links. In this way, it may be possible to be creative and economic in one's timetabling - for example, experiences of pushing and pulling in movement/dance to support science ('forces'), or 'sound' in music and science, 'pattern' in maths (shape tessellation) and in art, etc. Certain arts practices are more complex (and time-consuming) to organise than others. (Consider maybe, not everyone engaged in art at the same time?). It will make sense to review considerations of breadth and balance over longer time-scales than just the week: give over a full afternoon for art, then perhaps put art 'on hold' for the following half term, and reintroduce whatever was previously compromised. Pupils with PMLD will need a balance between new experiences in which to face fresh challenges, and familiar ones in which to develop their confidence and skill - it does not have to be something new each time!

The arts also provide valuable contexts for pupils' spiritual, social, moral and cultural development. Themes may have tentacles too, into other 'whole curriculum' areas - citizenship, environmental education, etc, as well as developing cross-curricular skills such as problem-solving and speaking and listening. The teacher should be aware also, of the many opportunities afforded by the arts, to work on children's Individual Education Plans in meaningful contexts - specific objectives very often to do with communication, social behaviour and motor development. Drama in particular, uses personal and social education (PSE) objectives as its essential content: addressing attitudes and issues, to enable children to empathise, and consider why people think and behave as they do (Peter, 1994, 1995). Pupils with PMLD will be sensitive to atmosphere and dramatic tension experienced by the group (generated by staff if necessary): peaks of excitement and calm. Through structured drama activities, with a clear 'game' framework, they may learn the 'language of drama whilst doing it' (see Peter, 1994): a sense of play, learning about roles and symbols, adapting their behaviour in the light of the make-believe, and 'suspending disbelief' as part of the group.

#### The Arts for All

It has never been an issue to disapply pupils with PMLD from the arts - for better and for worse, I suspect. Certainly, Programmes of Study in the arts are bland enough, for *all* pupils to be seen to be 'doing the National Curriculum'; for example, no pupil need be excluded from notionally '[exploring] moods and feelings and [developing] their response to music through dances' (DFE, 1995d). However, pupils with PMLD have an entitlement to experiences in the arts that are broad, balanced, relevant and appropriately differentiated. Equally, they need to be enabled to take increasing control of the creative process. This presents the teacher with the challenging task of planning for progression and continuity in the arts, recognising that pupils with PMLD will be 'plateauing' for a long time. Unless we take these issues seriously in relation to pupils with PMLD, I believe we risk settling for complacency, lulled under the notion that when all's said and done, the arts are 'good for them'. Such a view left unquestioned, risks selling short pupils with PMLD, with regard to their entitlement to a developmental arts curriculum, and to empowering them to take a degree of responsibility for shaping their own learning.

work in whichever arts practice is involved. In this way, they may develop their aesthetic sensitivity - an emerging awareness and ability to *appreciate the arts*. An appropriate point of contact needs to be identified with a work of art, a particular extract of music or clip of dance on video.....These need to be selected carefully according to the teaching point they will reinforce, in order to sharpen pupils' perceptions and enhance their understanding. For example, listening to the 'March of the Lions' (Saint-Saens' 'Carnival of the Animals'), with the volume control turned up each time we hear the lions roar (rising crescendo by the orchestra).....This image could be reinforced by picture cues - slides of lions projected in a darkened room, perhaps. Pupils may then be supported to explore dynamics (contrasts of loud and quiet) using percussion instruments, and perhaps a microphone to amplify voluntary and involuntary vocalisations. This may then be shaped into a class composition (recorded on tape), of alternating patterns of loud and quiet cacophony of sound between moments of silence, to make their own 'lions roaring music'...Do the pupils then show any awareness in response to the extract being re-played, particularly moments when the 'lions roar'?

As educators, we need to be alert to indicators of children's expression of preferences, and how we are reinforcing and consolidating that developing awareness with the child with PMLD (see Ware, 1994). Is the child *reacting* spontaneously, so that we ascribe a meaning to his or her behaviour; eg flinching at a particular texture - 'oh, you don't like that, do you'? Or is the child *responding* consistently, such that we interpret and feed this back to the child; eg smiles whenever he or she hears a certain extract of music - 'ah! It's that nice music again'? Or is the child *intentionally communicating* to us a preference; eg wriggling with excitement or eye-pointing at a particular instrument - 'would you like to play this one'? Whatever their ability to indicate preferences, children with PMLD need to be empowered with opportunities to make such structured choices, and to have those acted upon - regarded by others as creative decisions. For example, a supporting member of staff offers child a collage fabric: 'would you like this piece - yes or no?' 'Shall I put it here - yes or no?' If this feels like you're 'doing it for them', reflect for a moment on how many professional artists rely on their team of assistants to do their 'donkey work' for them! As an extreme example, the artist David Hockney is renowned for creating large-scale works by fax from Hollywood: hundreds of A4 sheets reassembled here in Britain!

This brings us to consideration of how pupils with PMLD may be enabled to devise original work in the arts - helped towards *composition*. It is here particularly, that much will depend on sensitive interpretation of a child's reaction, response or intention, and skilful questioning by supporting staff. As indicated above, 'closed' questions requiring a 'yes' or 'no' answer, can actually be very empowering (Peter, 1994, 1995, 1996a and b; Wills and Peter, 1996). It may be, that children's ability to appreciate the arts exceeds their ability to participate actively themselves - paradoxically, this can be very empowering. A child capable of indicating 'yes' or 'no' potentially may be a choreographer, designer, director or composer, in charge of the creative decisions for the rest of the group. For example, teacher may ask pupil 'shall we have a drum in our piece?' (child casts down eyes) - 'No, OK'. Judicious use of Information Technology will open many more opportunities for children with PMLD, and allow them to achieve a professional outcome. Avoid the pitfall however, of 'press this button and become an artist or composer': ensure that whichever program is used, that it supports the teaching of the particular element in question.

### Supporting the Arts

Strategies may be adopted, for children with PMLD increasingly to take control over their arts work over time. Clearly, children with PMLD are always likely to require support, but it may represent significant progress for a pupil, as the degree of support is faded out over time. Staff need to be particularly sensitive in 'reading' pupils with PMLD: what kind of physical prompt do they require - heavy physical support, or just lightly guiding - or a gesture, or simply a verbal prompt - or no prompt? The golden maxim with pupils with PMLD needs to be 'one step behind' - giving pupils the chance to achieve (or fail) first with minimal support, but with greater support immediately on hand, to ensure ultimate success. For example, holding and playing basic percussion instruments - tapping, scraping, shaking, blowing or plucking: techniques may be appropriately modelled by staff, with children then offered just sufficient assistance to achieve this for themselves. The crucial factor however, is to structure boundaries carefully, within which children may make choices and decisions. These may need to be tightly defined: paradoxically, creativity occurs within constraints, at all levels of ability - what Van Gogh achieved with his stick of charcoal, marks out his genius compared to the rest of us!

## References & further reading

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## Music Therapy with Clients with Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties

This article briefly outlines one music therapist's thoughts about working with people with profound and multiple learning difficulties.

### A GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF MUSIC THERAPY

In order to discuss the use of music therapy with this client group, it may first be useful to give a general description of music therapy.

The inborn ability in human beings to appreciate and respond to music usually remains unimpaired by handicap, injury or illness, and is not dependent on music training. For people who find verbal communication an inadequate form of self expression, music therapy offers a safe, secure space for the release of feelings. Fundamental to the approach is the development of a relationship between the client and therapist. Music-making forms the basis for communication in this relationship.

Both client and therapist take an active part in the sessions by playing, singing and listening. The therapist does not teach the client to sing or play an instrument. Rather, clients are encouraged to use accessible instruments and their own voices to explore the world of sound and to create a musical language of their own. By attending carefully to the quality and quantity of the sounds produced by the client, the therapist is able to support and encourage this process.

The music is improvised, thus enhancing the individual nature of each relationship. The therapist aims to facilitate positive changes in emotional well-being and behaviour. He or she also aims to help the client to develop an increased sense of self-awareness, and thereby to enhance his or her quality of life. The process may take place in individual or group music therapy sessions.

## **CLIENTS WITH PROFOUND AND MULTIPLE LEARNING DIFFICULTIES**

The problems faced by this client group can be multifarious and may include: restricted movement; an inability to hold or manipulate objects; sensory deficits; no verbal ability and a very limited means of any form of communication; an apparent lack of interest in the immediate environment; and an apparent lack of awareness of others. Given the above description of music therapy, it is difficult at first to imagine how these clients could use the therapy effectively, if at all.

## **CONSIDERATIONS WHEN SETTING UP A MUSIC THERAPY GROUP**

Because of the clients' range of problems, a music therapy group would tend to be small, consisting perhaps of three or four people. The room in which the therapy is to take place needs to be spacious enough to accommodate wheelchairs comfortably. For the purposes of this kind of music therapy it tends to be better to work with clients in their wheelchairs rather than lying on the floor on beanbags or cushions, as chairs support people in an upright position, leaving hands free to hold or touch instruments where this is possible.

The room should be as plain and free of distractions as practicable. If necessary, anything that is not directly useful for the therapy should be removed or put away. The room also needs to be quiet and free from outside disruption.

When taking the clients to the music room, apart from greeting them and explaining where they are going, talk is kept to an absolute minimum. The main objective is to create a focused space for both clients and therapist.

Consideration is then given as to how the clients will be positioned within the room. The group will sit in a circle, but the different needs of each person must be borne in mind, for example, positioning instruments next to a person's more able side; ensuring as far as possible that everyone can see and hear each other adequately; noticing whether anyone is showing distress at being placed next to certain other people.

The instruments that are used can include a whole range of large and small tuned and untuned percussion. Both hand-held and larger floor instruments are provided. Larger instruments might include a cymbal or some wind chimes or bells that are hung from a frame. These could be placed within a group member's reach.

## **WHAT HAPPENS IN GROUP THERAPY**

The session starts when all are assembled and the therapist sits and thinks about the group members. As far as possible, a session will begin out of silence. Certainly the therapist will be silent while she or he watches and listens to the group. Body movements, gestures, facial expressions and, of course, vocal (or even instrumental) sounds are carefully attended to. The therapist will then provide a musical line which tries both to be responsive to these communications and which links and holds them together in order to form a group piece.

The results of working in this way can be profound and moving. Group members will tend to begin moving together in a similar way. At the beginning of a session, as the music begins, clients have sometimes sat up straighter in their chairs, reaching upwards with their arms as though 'waking up'. At other times

a group may sway together or perhaps make faster, more jerky movements. Sometimes they may all sit looking down at the floor. Vocal sounds can be particularly important of course, ranging from small sighs to group chorusing when everyone 'sings' together. This can be quite startling when the clients sing in the same key as each other, or all start and stop together at the same time.

Group music therapy can bring people who show little or no awareness of others, into contact with each other. During at least parts of the sessions there is very much a sense of a shared experience.

There may also sometimes be a part of a session where each group member is approached individually and shown or offered an instrument to touch, hold or play. One person I work with is able to take and hold small instruments and is quite fussy about what she will use. We have developed a game in which, when she rejects an instrument by turning away from it, I verbalise her rejection of it with a long drawn out "N-O-" and withdraw it from her before coming back and offering it to her again in order to repeat the exercise. She quickly came to understand this game and will shake her head exaggeratedly and smile broadly as she continues playfully to reject the instruments that she doesn't want.

Another client in a group is tactile defensive, which means that she can experience touch, particularly on her hands, as uncomfortable or even painful. However, she has shown real delight in the sound of some handbells which were played very gently near her, and despite herself, she stretched her hand out to touch the source of this sound.

It may be worth mentioning however, that instruments have to be used carefully. It is unlikely that someone 'loves the bells'. This person's response to the instrument was dependent on a number of factors including: the situation; the particular relationship; the right moment; the right mood.

Groups need to be ended carefully too. A successful ending usually depends on the gradual lessening by the therapist of her or his musical output. The time that the session has to finish should be kept in mind by the therapist so that the ending is neither over-hurried nor prolonged.

## CONCLUSION

Music therapy as practised in the way described is more about facilitating and accepting different forms of self-expression and communication within a non-verbal relationship, than it is about getting people to do things or achieving goals. By providing a space in which people can be as playful or serious as they need, it is actually quite remarkable how much they can and will do. Benefits from music therapy can include increased eye contact, eye gaze, tracking of objects and people, motivation, concentration and posture. More importantly it can help to draw together isolated individuals within shared musical experiences.

Jane Baker  
Music Therapist



## PEOPLE AND CLAY - Margaret Power

The tools of my trade were a coarse, "groggy" clay (Raku), which can be patted and pushed, squeezed and stroked, changing under the hands of the student; and a strange assortment of kitchen implements and thrown away objects.

My medium was the students. As a designer/teacher I worked with them as with more tangible materials. Which way does corrugated paper bend naturally? What does the student do naturally? Are fists clenched? Fingers flicked? Palms used for pushing? Close and continuous observation gives guidelines to a starting point. Once the movement is matched to the materials things can begin to grow.

Art comes from inside a person and is a reaction to materials - a kind of conversation. It can be a discovery. What happens when liquid clay is trickled, splashed or blown? Art is control over something outside oneself by resources within oneself. Many people, especially those in hospitals, have had few opportunities for control, choice or decision making in their lives.

On a practical level, skills developed when handling clay can lead towards those needed in daily life - opening doors, handling cutlery, dressing and washing.

For a few people clay may be inappropriate, usually if it is assumed to be edible. I only realised how like milk a glaze can look when it vanished in one gulp. Luckily a phone call to the suppliers in Stoke-on-Trent confirmed that it was harmless.

Alan joined the group enthusiastically though he had no strength or co-ordination in his long, elegant hands, and was amiably inactive when I worked with other people. With my hands covering his we rolled coils of clay, pressed it between his palms, beat it with a mallet or used a rolling pin. Six weeks or so later I noticed his clay had disappeared (onto his lap). He had touched and moved it himself. Several weeks later he tried to pick up a fistful of clay which was stuck to the board. He struggled persistently for at least ten minutes, while I gave him full attention and encouragement but minimal help, slightly loosening the clay. He eventually triumphed, grasped it in his hand and quickly moved it to his mouth. What did that matter? His hands had become tools.

Martin, with sensitive and active hands, constantly patted his right hand with his left. He learned to roll a coil of clay not only with one hand, but both. By pushing the ends together he found he could make a ring and pass tools through it. Sometimes he persuaded my hands to do it for him - another kind of control!

Rory took quickly to rolling small pieces of clay into "worms". With help he learnt to join them by squeezing and pushing. His first venture was to build a "ladder", the whole length of the table, showing that he had developed directional awareness. Much later he started to build the coils into words; his own name, Mum, Dad. I'd had no idea he could write.

Sam hated the feel of clay, but found he could work without touching it. A rolling pin, butter beater, wooden spoons and mallet combined with a plastic cooking slice for cutting were used to build shapes. Solid lumps were opened up by pushing the handle of a wooden spoon down the middle. Slabs were rolled onto a cotton cloth, stood up on a straight cut edge and the corners squeezed and pushed together to make a vessel. Pointed tools (dead biro's?) could be pushed through the walls to let light in or make patterns. He enjoyed painting his pots with slip (liquefied clay of a different colour from the "body" clay, for example, red earthenware

on Raku or vice versa).

Most people need one-to-one attention, though I have had groups of six or more. Student and teacher must work together, using hands, tools and words to meet the movement, as it is experienced. Spontaneous singing to match a rhythm is often helpful.

Jake made very forceful, pushing movements with his hands and arms so he needed something to push against. A plastic bowl, lined with the top (bottom!) of a pair of old tights stretched over the inside of it provided resistance. He had a passion for picking up threads and tiny objects from the floor (showing excellent finger control) so he enjoyed breaking off and pushing little pellets of clay into the bowl until they joined up to make an inner wall. This was left to become "leather-hard" (not bone-dry) when the tights could be carefully peeled off the clay before drying out completely for firing. Joining the clay pieces was a new concept and technique which (literally) combined his habitual skills of pushing and pinching. Furthermore, interaction between us was needed to keep the bowl steady and of course to encourage.

None of these students had effective speech. Martin was deaf, but sang, as befitted a Welshman. Simon was more able, but didn't use more than isolated words, and could be violent (and affectionate). When he started using clay he so enjoyed the feeling that he would pinch it incessantly between the fingers of both hands as if he couldn't stop. He soon learnt to join the pinched pieces together, building them into small pots. Then he started to say, "make a boat" - "a house" - "a castle" - "a church". He learnt to roll out clay slabs, cut them to shape, join the "walls", paint and decorate with slip and eventually glaze his pieces. He was an impatient character but developed the necessary hand pressure and control, to the extent of cutting "Gothic" windows into the walls of his two foot long church. He came to know when it was Friday and came to the work room unprompted. He picked up phrases that he'd heard me use ("Give it a bash!") and when after three years he said, "My chair's going to break" I knew that clay was not the only thing he was getting under control.

Margaret Power

*My mainstream career was Art teaching in Secondary Schools and Colleges of Education. In the last ten years I joined the O.T. Department of a long-stay hospital for adults with a wide range of learning disabilities, promoting a variety of art activities. When the hospital closed after five years I worked in three other hospitals under the auspices of the Workers' Educational Association, using clay whenever appropriate. Two of the wards were home to people with P.M.L.D., some with challenging behaviour. All were adults spanning an age range of fifty years.*

## CLAY WITH PMLD STUDENTS

### FORGET ABOUT ART - START BY WATCHING

\*\*\*\*\* OBSERVE YOUR STUDENT IN A POSITIVE WAY

What does he/she do naturally?

What does he/she do with his/her hands?

clench fists?

flick fingers?

push with palms?

Working from that, choose materials and tools to match the movement.

\*\*\*\*\* OBSERVE YOUR MATERIALS IN THE SAME WAY

Which way does corrugated paper bend most easily?

How does clay respond at different stages of drying?

Working from that, use materials and processes to **SUIT THE STUDENT**

**MATCH AND WATCH** giving time for something to happen -  
giving encouragement and appreciation -

**ART CAN HELP PEOPLE TO LEARN** because it is a direct experience -

**ART IS LIKE A CONVERSATION** - confrontation and interaction between a PERSON and MATERIALS.

### WARNING

If you feel you are not "artistic" you may be tempted to copy ideas from a book or use "recipes" for "creating" things. These are often meaningless to a disabled person (or indeed to a child) who has different ideas altogether

### BECAUSE

**ART** comes from **INSIDE** a person

**ART** is a person's **REACTION** to **MATERIALS**

**ART** is **DISCOVERY** of what happens when clay is

**ART** is **CONTROL** over something **OUTSIDE** oneself by resources **WITHIN** oneself.

**ART** involves **CHOOSING \* DECIDING \* LEARNING**

Lack of opportunities to **MAKE CHOICES** leads to **PASSIVITY** and/or **BOREDOM** and **CHALLENGING BEHAVIOUR**

The handling of materials can be enjoyed for its own sake.

This can **develop** into degrees of **CONTROL** involving **CHOICE** and the making of **DECISIONS**

**SKILLS** involved in handling clay may encourage similar movements in use in daily life - opening doors, turning taps, dressing.

## WAYS OF HELPING

**GOLDEN RULE** Having something done FOR YOU does NOT help you learn to do it yourself.

Helping must be less direct - in fact **ENABLING**.

1. PREPARATION OF FURNITURE - access and levels
2. YOUR OWN POSITION - eye to eye, behind or beside (which ear?)
3. TACTILE HELP - your hands over/under theirs
  - stroking to relax hands
  - rubbing to stimulate
4. VERBAL HELP - talk through every stage
  - sing with a rhythmic process
5. POSITIONING MATERIALS or TOOLS
  - turn clay to meet the tool
6. HELPING TO START - encourage direct handling of materials
  - Break down the stages as necessary:
    - a) "Give me your hand"
    - b) "Can you pick up the sponge?" - if not, practise meeting of thumb and forefinger
    - c) "Let's dip it in the slip" - do it together if necessary
    - d) "Now let's dab the sponge on the clay"
    - e) "Look - you did that"

**REPETITION** gives pleasure and security BUT can prevent development and become obsessional. Introduce a **DEVELOPMENT** when you think it possible.

7. HELPING TO LEARN A NEW MOVEMENT
  - e.g. pinching - use **tactile** and **verbal** method together:
    - a) "Can you pinch my hand?"
    - b) "Shall I pinch your hand?"
    - c) "Now you pinch me"
    - d) "Can you pinch the clay?"
8. HELPING TO CHOOSE - **not an open choice - set limits**
  - "Which coloured apron - green or yellow?"
  - (if not understood, present both and get student to take one)
9. HELPING TO LEARN - CONCEPTS
  - Experience of **touching** leads to understanding of **space - direction - body awareness**

### TACTILE ACTIVITY

feeling own face/body (and yours) \*\*\*\*  
touching clay and tools \*\*\*\*\*

poking or pushing through \*\*\*\*\*  
turning round \*\*\*\*\*  
turning over \*\*\*\*\*  
handling clay pieces/lumps/slabs \*\*\*\*\*

### SPATIAL UNDERSTANDING

up/down - back/front - left/right  
joining by merging, linking rings,  
sticking with slip  
looking through  
other side  
upside down  
building up (adding)  
taking apart (dividing)

## DEALING WITH CLAY

This very basic information will be enough to start with. **HANDLE CLAY YOURSELF BEFORE YOU GIVE IT TO STUDENTS. IT SHOULD BE SOFT BUT NOT STICKY.** If it cracks while being worked, dampen with a sponge or spray lightly with water. **CLAY THAT IS TOO HARD TO USE IS VERY DISCOURAGING.** Stickiness can be an experience, especially if contrasted with firmer clay. **STORAGE** must be in an **AIRTIGHT** container or in polythene wrapping.

Roll the bag outwards using string or wire to slice off the amount you need, or claw it out with your fingers held close together. Divide it and beat into rough solid shapes **CLOSE THE NECK OF THE BAG IMMEDIATELY** or it will dry up and harden.

Raku clay (see below) can be **REVIVED**, if only slightly too hard, by wrapping in damp sacking for a while. If not to be kept for firing or display clay can be **RECYCLED** by covering in water, however hard. Raku will soften in a few hours and dries quite quickly. Drain off surplus water and spread out to dry, preferably on an absorbent surface or expose to air. A smooth wooden board or table top is fine. **DON'T LET IT GET TOO DRY** - turn it if necessary. When no longer sticky, beat into rough balls or a large block and wrap in polythene. **MAKE SURE IT IS AIRTIGHT.**

### MINIMUM EQUIPMENT

Airtight containers  
Buckets with lid - Bowls - Polythene bags/sheeting  
Rectangular wooden boards if possible  
Cartons for slips, recycling "sweepings" and small fragments of clay  
Any "tools" e.g. old kitchenware from Oxfam for beating, impressing, cutting, incising  
String or wire (not too thick) for slicing clay  
Cotton cloths and sacking for "lining" between clay and working surface  
**FOR CLEANING UP:** Sponges, Scraper, Newspaper, Absorbent cloths, Water

A valuable luxury is a Banding Wheel (approximately £20) encouraging awareness of 3D.

The best **CLAY** for your purpose (and cheapest) is 1154 **RAKU** (available in bags of 12.5 kg. at approximately £5.40 plus VAT from Potclays, Stoke-on-Trent, or local Potters' Supplies).

For contrast and decoration, a Red Earthenware liquefied clay (slip) can be used. Slips can be bought dry more cheaply and water added slowly, stirring to the consistency of single cream. Use a coarse sieve if available.

**DRY UNFIRED CLAY IS VERY BRITTLE** and cannot be handled safely but remembering that the **MAKING EXPERIENCE** is usually more important than results, firing is not essential. Non-firing clay e.g. Potclays' "New Clay" is smoother in texture than Raku, but not as "responsive".

ASSESSMENT AND RECORD OF RESPONSE AND DEVELOPMENT

NAME .....

CONCEPTS AND AWARENESS

COMMENT

- Surface - smooth/rough .....
- Surface - wet/dry .....
- Surface - texture/pattern .....
- Dividing .....
- Building up .....
- Joining - pushing together .....
- Joining - overlapping .....
- Making a hole - looking through .....
- Horizontal and vertical .....
- 3D - other side .....
- 3D - upside down .....

HANDLING SKILLS

- Touching and handling clay .....
- Beating with palms of hands .....
- Use of fingers/finger tips .....
- Squeezing .....
- Pinching - thumb and fingers .....
- Beating with a tool .....
- Rotating .....
- Pushing through .....
- Squeezing and turning .....
- Use of two hands .....
- Opening out with thumb .....
- Forming a ring - coiled and joined .....
- Scooping with fingers or tool .....
- Impressing wooden, plastic or metal tools into clay .....
- Cutting with plastic or blunt metal knife .....
- Scratching or drawing onto surface .....
- Rolling with rolling pin .....
- Rolling coils - one hand .....
- Rolling coils - both hands together .....
- Adding on/joining .....
- Turning a wheel .....
- Rolling "beads" - one hand on board or table .....
- Rolling "beads" - both hands using palms .....
- Patterning - stripes, bands, zig zags, spots,  
blobs, wavy lines. ....

## Theatre for young people with PMLD - who benefits?

Jon Palmer, Artistic Director of Interplay Theatre Company reflects on current theatre practice.

Theatre is an eclectic art form which draws on many disciplines - drama, music, literature, movement, visual imaging. By fusing all these elements theatre communicates ideas and issues which inform our understanding of the world around us. At its best this communication works on a whole range of levels, engaging our emotions as well as our intellect. It should be a stimulus to our senses and as such is an obvious medium through which to engage young people with profound and multiple learning disabilities.

To this end artists working in the field of 'special needs' have explored additional communication techniques - aromatherapy, physiotherapy, participatory music. All these have the power to move and motivate but the danger is that through their use the medium gets interpreted as 'therapy'. Surely of equal importance is the concern that these young people simply have access to 'theatre' just like anyone else. As theatre makers we need to hold on to the social benefits of what we do.

Since the mid 1980's Interplay Theatre Company has attempted to address the particular needs of PMLD students. We have been challenged to find new and accessible theatre forms and this has led to the development of multi-sensory environments for small intimate groups.

'Fairground Attractions' (1995) - in which groups were taken on a simulated journey through a fairground - was an attempt to fuse hands-on stimulus with a theatrical experience. The hall of mirrors, the one-armed bandits, tests of strength and textures like candy floss - all very stimulating and therapeutic. But the key to the production's success was that the stimulus was placed in a context. Through the theme of 'fairground' we were also able to take the audience on a narrative journey. Admittedly, this narrative was quite minimal but it did have an emotional as well as a sensory quality. It did have a beginning, a middle and an end. Characters were loud and gruff as well as warm and sensitive. Above all, the audience experienced something of the real world in the safety of a theatrical convention.

Since then, through residencies and workshops we have continued to explore intellectual and emotive responses through sensory work. At the Swan Theatre, Worcester for example 'The Library of Life' (1996) was a means by which students from Rose Hill and Manor Park Schools catalogued their experiences of the world around them in a very tactile way. The work was then shared with mainstream peers and proved a very empowering experience for the PMLD students. This is certainly more than the students being passive recipients of some therapeutic stimulus.

Most recently we have begun to include parents and guardians in the creative process. They are the real experts when it comes to gauging the social as well as educational benefits of a theatre experience for their children. A small group has been formed to help us develop our latest project - 'Family Matters'. Our initial research has led to a desire to explore 'story'. The intention is to create and publish our own book and to produce a theatre piece based upon it.

The book will be available to all schools who take the show and to every family who's child is part of the audience. By familiarising themselves with the story in advance the performance will be part of the students' world - the book will provide a context for the show. And by developing the story with students and their parents we will ensure that the content will also be contextualised. The process will examine the whole notion of what we mean by 'story' and 'book' and as a consequence 'theatre'. It is a huge undertaking which starts in earnest this autumn. The book will be produced next autumn and the show will tour to schools and family centres in Spring 1999.

In the meantime the company continue to tour 'inclusive' projects - theatre performances for whole school audiences. These have been informed by the multi-sensory lessons of the PMLD work. Whilst not possible, or necessarily desirable, to provide the direct hands-on experience of the small-group projects these offer an equally relevant opportunity to be part of a larger audience with all the attendant social benefits.

In March of this year Interplay, together with the Oily Cart from London, facilitated a conference at the Polka Theatre - 'Learning Curves', an exploration of theatre for young people with learning disabilities. The outcome was a genuine celebration of a dynamic and innovative art form which is not only benefiting PMLD children but is beginning to help mainstream artists to question their practice and explore how they can present work which is accessible.

Theatre is an interactive art form - where the response of the audience informs the artist as much as the artist informs the audience. Perhaps we are finally realising a vision of theatre as one of those areas where we can stop thinking in terms of 'adapting' working practice for the benefit of those with PMLD. How much more satisfying to be able to say that those with PMLD are adapting our working practice for the benefit of all.

'Stepping Stones' - Interplay's current show is touring special schools and theatre venues until the end of May. For performance details please contact Alexis Hutson on 0113 263 8556 (Tel. & Minicom)

For a copy of the 'Learning Curves' conference report contact Jo Belloli at Polka Theatre, 240 The Broadway, Wimbledon SW19 1SB.



## **Arts activities for people with a visual and learning disability**

**Anne Robson, Assistant Arts Officer, RNIB**

In May/June 1997 RNIB Holidays and Leisure Services Department will be publishing a new information pack which currently has the broad working title of "Arts activities for people with a visual and learning disability".

The intention is that the pack will be used by arts organisations and arts venues but also by people working with multiply disabled people, including friends and family.

Art can be elitist and is often inaccessible to a vast range of people. Art gallery or theatre staff may hold the belief that they have little to offer visually impaired people, even less for those with more profound disabilities. In many cases they may be right, but it is more likely to be due to a lack of awareness than any physical barriers.

Similarly, many visually impaired people, with or without additional disabilities, may have been denied the opportunity to participate in the arts because of a belief that the arts are a visual medium and therefore not suitable.

A lot depends on how "the arts" are defined. Any form of movement to music can be interpreted as dance. Painting need not involve a fine paintbrush - fingers, sponges, or large brushes which are easier to handle are all methods of applying paint. An art project at Orchard Hill Further Education Centre centred on "edible art". Students cut up tinned fruit and arranged it onto flan bases to make patterns. While this type of art has a particularly short shelf life it definitely has more than an aesthetic appeal!

Arts activities should be age appropriate, but it is worth remembering that many people may have been denied the opportunity as children to experiment with clay and paint or collage which others take for granted.

The new RNIB information pack is designed as a starting point. It provides a few examples of successful projects, some contact addresses and sources of further information.

## Organising arts activities

While there is not really a right or wrong way of doing things, there are a few general points which are particularly relevant to organising arts activities:

- **Objectives.** Overall, art should be fun. It could however, also be a way of encouraging people to communicate and work together. It is an important means of self-expression and creativity. (This applies equally to non disabled artists). Think about your objectives before developing an arts project.
- **Timing.** Activity sessions should not be too long if your participants are to maintain their interest and concentration. With this in mind, try to choose activities which have quick rewards and will keep people motivated. Allow warm up time for introductions and a chance to relax and wind down at the end of the session.
- **Environment.** Improved lighting or task lights may help people with low vision. Colour contrast could also be helpful. For example, trying to paint on white paper on a white table could be difficult. Try using coloured paper instead. Using brightly coloured paints or glittery paper could also help. Any equipment such as pots for water or paste could also be colour contrasted against the worksurface. Collage type work with cloth, scrunched up tissue paper, dried pasta shapes etc might be a good alternative to paint and paper.

Environment is equally important for drama or dance activities. Ensure that there are no obstructions which people could trip over or bump into. Think about acoustics. If participants are lying on the floor, footsteps etc will sound much louder.

Unfamiliar environments, such as museums, galleries or arts centres can be daunting. If you are planning a visit try to prepare for it as much as possible. This includes making practical plans and arrangements (ie travel, access to the building) but also preparing participants. Particular themes could be used for activities in advance of a museum visit or songs/music could be played prior to a theatre visit.

- **Encouragement.** People with visual and learning disabilities can sometimes seem passive. They may wait for things to happen to them as they have not learnt to do things for themselves. Encourage participants to examine their surroundings and to touch materials which are being used. Give them plenty of time to absorb this information. Clear explanation and some hand over hand demonstration will help participants with particular tasks. Encourage participants to enjoy their own achievements.
- **Be flexible and experiment.** Everyone sees things differently, but try to imagine things from a user perspective. Things may not turn out exactly how you imagined, but draw on the positive parts of the project and learn from the negative parts.

### **Sources of further information**

If you lack the confidence to design your own projects, seek the help of those who have wide experience in the area. There are a number of arts consultants who specialise in work with disabled people. RNIB can provide you with contacts - some are listed in the new information pack. Regional arts boards and Shape/Artlink groups should also be able to help. Arts organisations can also offer advice on areas such as drawing up contracts and rates of pay.

If you would like further information on arts for visually impaired people or would like a copy of the new information pack "Arts activities for people with a visual and learning disability" please contact Anne Robson, Assistant Arts Officer, Royal National Institute for the Blind, Holidays and Leisure Services, 224 Great Portland Street, London W1N 6AA. Tel: 0171-388 1266.

### **Other publications from RNIB**

"Music for Leisure for people with a visual and learning disability" Available from Simon Labbett, Music Officer, RNIB Holidays and Leisure Services (address as above).

"Planning individual leisure activities for adults with visual and learning disabilities" available from Gill Levy, RNIB Information and Practice Development Service on Multiple Disability (address as above).

## *An Exciting New Approach To Music-Making...*

Is it possible to provide exciting, interactive musical activities for children who cannot hold instruments, clap their hands or sing? And is it realistic to expect so-called 'unmusical' staff to lead these sessions?

With this double challenge in mind, SOUNDABOUT, a group of Oxfordshire-based teacher / musicians have devised an approach to pre- Key Stage 1 music which taps into the earliest pre-verbal sound-making activities of infancy. These fundamentals of music-making - listening, drumming, silence, chanting, call and response - which overlap with the basics of communication, can be used at any stage of the school day for a few minutes at a time, as well as during timetabled music sessions. Staff do not have to be able to sing in tune and are trained to improvise clapping and drumming games around the sounds which the children may make themselves, so as to encourage the two-way communicative aspect of music-making.

SOUNDABOUT also offers staff training in:

- music microtechnology, including *Sound Beam* and other midi-based technologies
- drumming workshops
- basic *Veronica Sherborne* body awareness and developmental movement experience
- Introduction to *TACPAC* tactile sensory awareness package with music
- *Foundsound*: the use of found or low-cost materials to create instruments or sound sculptures suitable for special needs environments.

In their ON-SITE INSET sessions, SOUNDABOUT work with both staff and pupils, class by class, but can tailor training sessions to each school's particular needs. All these activities can be used to support all areas of the National Curriculum.

If you want further information, phone: **Ann Brown on 01608 642009**

or write to her at:  
**12 Alfred Terraces  
Chipping Norton  
Oxon OX7 5HB**

## Further Education for Students with Profound Multiple Disabilities. A way forward

Nicola Martin

### **Abstract**

This paper outlines legislation which signals a move towards entitlement of further education for students with profound and multiple disabilities and explores a curriculum model which may enable colleges to rise to the challenge.

### **Key Points:**

The Disability Discrimination Act 96.

Inclusive Learning The Thomlinson Report \ the concept of linear progression and maintenance of skills.

College Disability Statemented and Equal opportunities Policies.

Further Education Funding Council Funding Methodology

Open College Accreditation.

National Federation of Access Centres (NFAC)

### **The Thomlinson Report**

On September 1996 'Inclusive Learning', the Report of the learning difficulties and \ or disabilities committee chaired by Professor John Thomlinson was published by The Further Education Funding council (FEFC). The brief of the committee was to examine opportunities currently available for students with disabilities in Colleges of Further Education. Provision for those with profound and multiple disabilities (PMLD) obviously fell within the remit of the survey and the results are not as bleak as colleagues in school may imagine. Although regional variations are marked, overall about 5% of the total British FE College population have learning difficulties and \ or disabilities. Underrepresented groups within this 5% are not surprisingly those with emotional and behavioural difficulties, mental health distress and profound and multiple disabilities.

Thomlinson recommendations sought to redress the balance of un-representation. Most relevant to those with PMLD is a redefinition of the concept of progress within the FE context. 'Inclusive Learning' signals an acknowledgment, for the first time, that progress can be linear or horizontal and indeed that 'maintenance of skill' constitutes learning for some students with PMLD.

'Inclusive Learning' is the term used by Thomlinson to describe an FE system in which 'teachers have a better understanding of the different ways in which people learn, what their learning goals are and the environment which will help them to achieve the goals' . Cooper 96 p4.

## **Transitional Planning**

Obviously a short sharp shock move from a special school into mainstream FE College is not the way to create the learning environment described by Thomlinson. Students with PMLD are probably the most vulnerable within the college population and as such require a gentle planned and gradual transition from one context to another. Outreach provision may be a way forward for many. There is no reason why FE staff cannot deliver within an environment which the student knows, for example the day centre. A gradual move from one context to another could be built in as a progression goal. School links programmes are also designed to fulfill the same purpose with FE involvement beginning ideally from The Transitional planning meeting.

In order for the idea to work the right levels of support must be available, appropriate curriculum opportunities and staff with the desired sort of expertise must be in place within college and sufficient goodwill between agencies is needed in order for collaboration to take place.

## **Funding**

The FEFC funding mechanism acknowledges the additional costs which colleges will incur in education students with learning difficulties and disabilities. It works on the basis that the greater the amount of additional support required by an individual the higher the cost. The system requires a detailed assessment to identify and indeed cost additional support for each student. Review and evaluation need to be built into the individual support package and audit evidence must be generated to prove that funds are used for their intended purpose. Corlett and Cooper (96) suggest that 'although there are inevitable imperfections it does mean that, at least in principle, colleges are not financially disadvantaged by providing for students with additional needs arising from a disability or learning difficulty' p29. Additional support funding applies to full and part time students and is described in a banded system which enables the dedication of higher levels of funding to those students requiring most support.

## **Disability Statement**

How then do college honour the principle of inclusive education in terms of curriculum entitlement? In December 1996 all colleges of FE were expected to produce a 'Disability Statement' as set out in the Disability Discrimination Act 1996. Obtaining a copy of this document would be a useful starting point in order to ascertain what is on offer in your local college for students with PMLD. Sight of the college 'Strategic Plan' and 'Equal Opportunities Policy' could also yield useful information. The most important contact would be the Learning Support Co-ordinator, Learning Support Manager, or someone with a similar title. If there appears to be no suitable curriculum option on offer at the moment in your local college then a joint planning meeting involving the Head of Learning Support, schools, social services, parents and other relevant agencies could be suggested as a means of opening up a dialogue and opening doors.

## **Curriculum**

At High Peak College in Derbyshire equality of opportunity extends to meet the needs of students with PMLD. Two years before Thomlinson a curriculum document was presented to Greater Manchester Open College Federation (a branch of a national accrediting body). This piece of work sets out objectives which are relevant to students with PMLD and devised in such a way that tiny incremental steps of progress can be measured.

The curriculum framework created by the 'Personal Development' module enabled students to work towards the objectives within a wide variety of experiential learning contexts. Objectives like 'make choices', 'show preferences', 'complete individual pieces of work', lend themselves well to activities such as art, crafts, pottery, music appreciation, yoga and cookery, and create a learning environment which values the achievements of students with PMLD. Many of the students begin their course in outreach centres and progress into college in order to participate in other options on offer within the 'Individual Learning Programme'. The 'Personal Development' module is an entry level qualification. Because Thomlinson has endorsed 'linear progression' students may move on to study a specific area in more depth but still at entry level. Many students for example progress from 'Personal Development' to Arts and Crafts Entry level modules and from outreach to college. In November 1996 certificates from the open college were presented to High Peak College students who had been studying for the 'Personal Development' Module in a residential facility run by Scope. Some of those students have PMLD and have gone onto other Entry level modules. Others, though profoundly physically disabled are intellectually capable of studying at GCSE level and have gone on to do just that. Initial assessment is obviously an important factor in ensuring that the learning environment is appropriate for the individual.

## **Staff Development**

Thomlinson advocates staff training in order to enable tutors and care staff to work with students with PMLD. Again collaboration between agencies is essential in order to share skills. Colleges who have taken on board the spirit of Thomlinson and extended their provision to meet the needs of students with PMLD could also work alongside colleagues within FE in a Consultancy role.

## **NEAC**

Another useful point of contact may be the National Federation of Access Centres (NFAC). Within their brief is enabling technology which may open doors for some students with PMLD.

## **Conclusion**

The climate is right. Goodwill exists in FE colleges. Thomlinson has acknowledged the validity of FE for students with PMLD. One example of appropriate curriculum framework is available from 'Greater Manchester Open College Federation'. There may be others.

## **References**

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**Nicola Martin** is Head of Centre for Supported Learning at High Peak College, Buxton, Derbyshire. She has a B. Ed. (Hons) and an M. Ed. in Special Education, a diploma in working with students who have dyslexia. Her teaching experience in special schools and colleges spans 15 years and includes work with students with PMLD. She has a range of publications in special education journals, and has given presentations at conferences and carried out consultancy work.



## **FUTURE FOCUS - Sport, Outings and Outdoor Activity**

Continuing this issue's underlying theme of leisure, and providing it with a seasonal aspect, the next issue of PMLD-Link will focus on sport, outings and outdoor activity.

As the summer approaches we all relish the opportunity to get out of doors and become a little more active. We would like to hear your ideas and experiences about encouraging the participation of people with PMLD in this impetus. What outings and holidays have worked particularly well for service users and pupils with PMLD? What sporting and other forms of recreational activities have they enjoyed? How have they been included in gentle activities and in more adventurous ones? What issues arose? What advice would you give to others undertaking a similar venture. What pitfalls should be avoided? What are the potential risks and how can they be assessed?

Leisure activity undertaken by a group, or by one individual is of interest. We would like to hear about leisure activities facilitated by the use of adapted equipment and, by contrast, those taking place entirely in community settings with individualised support. Researching this area has brought home to me the wide range of activities that are possible (see, for example, Hogg and Cavet, 1995).

Outings, holidays and outdoor activities present opportunities for making new relationships and becoming acquainted with people in the surrounding community, as well as for experiencing the stimulation of unfamiliar environments.

News about innovatory approaches and the fostering of community links would be especially welcome. do write and share your views and experiences with us.

JUDITH CAVET  
Staffordshire University

### *Reference:*

Hogg, J. and Cavet, J. (eds) (1995) *Making Leisure Provision for People with Profound Learning and Multiple Disabilities*. Chapman & Hall

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## *Art for All – I: The Framework*

## *Art for All – II: The Practice*

Peter, M.

David Fulton Publishers,  
1996, 82 pp and 92 pp,  
£13.99 each

ISBN 1-85346-317-5  
and 1-85346-418-X

Despite Peter's claim to be a 'non-specialist', these two A4 format, colour-illustrated volumes in the justifiably popular . . . *for All* series contain a wealth of 'strategies for structuring and supporting appropriate art activity' for pupils with 'wide-ranging learning difficulties' – and including those with profound and multiple learning difficulties.

The author intends that these two books should stand as 'independent texts', but that they are best used in conjunction with one another. *The Framework* deals essentially with theory. Chapter 1 offers a rationale for teaching art to pupils with learning difficulties and sets the context for art in the National Curriculum. Chapter 2 explores the 'art making process' and begins to ask how pupils can be helped to develop their own art making in National Curriculum terms. The remaining bulk of this first book is then devoted to an analysis of the elements of art – pattern and texture; colour; line and tone; and shape, space and form. Although these chapters do offer a grounding in the 'theory' of art, they are

richly illustrated with monochrome and colour reproductions of children's work and with prose descriptions of art making processes in action. A wide range of media is represented in these examples and the relevance of the illustrations fully justifies their presence.

*The Framework* closes with a section on understanding and appreciating art, with some useful tips on using the work of other artists, and some blank formats which could be used to record the progress that individual pupils make through the art curriculum.

The second of these books, *The Practice*, as its name suggests, is full of very useful and eminently practical tips for teachers. It describes the use of a wide variety of different art making resources, divided into 'wet' and 'dry' materials. There is a brief section on the role of information technology; a chapter on 'art resources in the community' (both in terms of site visits and the role of artists in residence); and a concluding chapter on display and classroom organisation. As fans of the . . . *for All* series in general, and Melanie Peter in particular, have come to expect, a great diversity of ideas is presented here.

And are the interests of staff working with pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties well-represented? That will depend upon your expectations. *The Practice*

begins by introducing a model for the development of skills and processes within the art curriculum. This model links typical 'normal development' with the kinds of art making activities teachers may introduce across Key Stages 1 and 2. This is the kind of model which suggests that some pupils may reach a 'plateau', described as 'pre/lower Key Stage 1', at the 'scribbling stage' typically associated with infants and children in the early years. Much of the development described here involves notions like 'fine control' and 'complex and challenging procedures'. The possibility of access for pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties to art experiences designed for pupils working in 'upper Key Stage 2' is thus effectively limited to notions like 'learning to trust to the materials for inspiration' or 'developing a creative attitude to "mistakes"'.

*The Practice* moves on to describe the planning and delivery of art lessons. The task of differentiating art making for diverse groups of pupils is addressed, although again pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties will be found having a number of 'sensory' or even 'multi-sensory' experiences with paint and clay or possibly 'contributing skyscape' to a group collage. While acknowledging that the challenge of cutting, drawing, painting or carving in order to make 'intricate designs' must be presented to some

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pupils, it would have been good to have seen the issue of access for pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties emphasised in the activities designed for older pupils. As more and more schools seek to include pupils with a wide range of prior achievements and experiences in their teaching groups, perhaps particularly in subjects like art where there are no difficulties over levels and SATs, this would have been a useful dimension to explore.

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## *Music for All – developing music in the curriculum for pupils with special educational needs*

Wills, P. and Peter, M.

David Fulton Publishers, paperback, 75 pp, £12.99

ISBN 1-85346-280-2

Yes, this is yet another volume in the excellent Fulton . . . *for All* series and yes, the prolific Melanie Peter has been at work again. Noting that this book is aimed at the whole range of pupils with 'special educational needs', the authors emphasise in their introduction that 'even the most severely disabled members of society may be enabled to share in creative musical experiences'. This book sets out to realise that aim.

Wills and Peter give their discussion of music an educational rather than a therapeutic context and, at an early stage in the text,

introduce the central issues of differentiation and access. The book then offers both formal text and a number of practical examples of activities, lesson plans, pupil objectives and recording formats. Suggestions for resources, including electronic equipment and information technology, are given and supported by descriptions of these items in use in classrooms.

There is a relationship here with *Art for All*. Naturally some of the planning and recording formats are similar. The book offers the same mix of theoretical framework and practical illustration (although the reader frequently feels the need for an audio tape to go with *Music for All* as the authors suggest activities like 'improvising around individual pupils' names' or listening to 'marimba-type instruments from Uganda').

The developmental paradigm which locates pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties in 'lower Key Stage 1' along with 'nursery/reception pupils' is also here. But if I climb down from that particular soapbox and reflect soberly upon the value of the *Art for All* and *Music for All* books, it is clear that they will be of great benefit to practitioners. They are very reasonably priced, accessible, attractive volumes packed full to bursting point with life, vitality and ideas. Make sure that they are added to the . . . *for All* collection in your resource area.

Richard Byers is reviews editor for *PMLD Link*.

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## *Making Sense of the World*

Helen Bradley and Bob Snow

Sense, the National Deafblind & Rubella Association 1994 54 pp

ISBN 0-9510756-40

This booklet is an introductory guide for carers working with adults who have combined sensory and learning disabilities. Its stated aims are to increase awareness of some issues and to give some practical ideas for working with people who have such complex disabilities.

The introduction gives a brief outline of what dual sensory impairment may involve, and some of the implications for people who are deaf and blind and also have a learning disability. It sets out some basic principles for working with deafblind people under the headings of routine, consistency, involvement and realistic activities. The introduction is followed by a number of sections dealing with touch, communication, vision, hearing, movement and mobility, adapting the environment and challenging behaviour.

Section 2 'Using Touch' is a short discussion of the importance of touch to a person who is deafblind, and the effect of deafblindness on their use of touch to find out about the world around them. Practical suggestions are

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made throughout the section and a reprint of an article on the use of massage is also included in this section. Although its relationship to touch is clear, the article is written from the perspective of developing communication, and this topic is discussed in the next section.

Section 3 'Developing Communication' is the longest section in the publication. It emphasises the importance of forming a close relationship and using everyday activities in developing communication. Practical suggestions include making an initial assessment and a description of different methods of communication that can be used. Ways of introducing two of these methods - using everyday objects and signing - are described in some detail, and clear illustrations of two kinds of finger spelling (block capitals method and deafblind manual alphabet) are given. The section ends with ideas for deciding on the content of the communication vocabulary using the most important signals for the individual.

Sections 4 and 5 look at 'Using Vision' and 'Using Hearing'. Both sections are introduced by a brief discussion of the difficulties of assessing vision and hearing in someone who has both sensory impairments and learning disabilities. In Using Hearing, this is followed by useful information on hearing aids and a detailed programme for introducing an aid. In each

of these two sections suggestions are made for carrying out assessments, followed by ideas for encouraging the use of vision and hearing. In Using Vision, general principles in developing vision are set out, and practical ideas are given for developing some specific visual skills. Both sections include information about how the environment can help the use of both vision and hearing.

Sections 6 and 7 deal with 'Movement and Mobility' and 'Adapting the Environment'. Section 6 gives practical ideas for activities to encourage movement and helping a person with dual sensory impairments to find their way around in their environment. The writers comment that this is a very important area of skill development. It is also an area which is very easy to overlook or ignore when a person has learning disabilities as well as sensory impairments. In Section 7 the writers give some general suggestions for changes which can be made to the environment to help in mobility that can be adapted to each individual's needs.

Section 8 'Challenging Behaviours' provides a brief description of some of the most common behaviours which can be challenging to staff. These include extreme passivity, aggression, eye poking, finger flapping and light gazing, and problems with wearing clothes. The writers give some suggestions for ways of helping to reduce these

behaviours, but they point out that "Tackling challenging behaviour in deafblind people requires a combination of insight, understanding and patience."

The final section is a resource list of suppliers of equipment, books and magazine articles, videos, and useful addresses. These are given under separate headings for toys and equipment, microtechnology, communication, using vision, using hearing, movement and mobility and challenging behaviour. Also given is a list of books for general background reading, and other sources of information.

It is inevitable in a relatively short booklet which also attempts to be comprehensive, that there is a feeling of 'scratching the surface' in most of the sections. However, it provides enough information and ideas in each area to help enable staff to start to help a person with dual sensory impairment, and it therefore achieves its modest aims of raising awareness and giving practical ideas. The suggestions for resources and further information will help the eager practitioner to find ways of increasing their understanding of the very complex needs of people with both dual sensory impairment and learning disabilities.

Carol Ouvry is editor of *PMLD link*.

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## BOOKS

*Sensory Cookery for Very Special People* by Flo Longhorn

Including curriculum; graduated cookery skills; record sheets; one-step cookery; resources; sensory cookery around the world.

ISBN 1-900231-30-1

Price: £8.50

*Sex Education and Sexuality for Very Special People* by Flo Longhorn

Planning policies; programmes; sensory approaches; growing up; adulthood; masturbation; menstruation; gender; dilemmas; personal assistance policy guideline.

ISBN 1-900231-20-1

*Enhancing Education through the Use of Ultraviolet Light and Fluorescing Materials* by Flo Longhorn

Health and safety policies; effective black rooms; learning to look; art curriculum; academic curriculum; equipment and resources; curriculum development

ISBN 1-900231-25-5

All the above books are available from

Catalyst Education Resources Limited, 1A Potters Cross, Wootton, Bedfordshire  
MK43 9JG Tel: 01234 764108

*Solving Children's Sleep Problems: A Step by Step Guide for Parents* by Dr. Lyn Quine  
published by Beckett Karlson (1997)

The information is presented in a clear, concise and structured manner with easy to follow charts and procedures.

ISBN - 901292 01 0

Price 12.99

\* This book will be reviewed in the next issue of PMLD-Link

*Families in Context: Emerging Trends in Family Support and Early Intervention*

edited by Barry Carpenter and published by David Fulton Publishers (July 1997)

For any professional concerned with young children with special needs and their families. This book seeks to share approaches to working with families by examining the context of the family itself and the role of key family members such as mothers, fathers, siblings and grandparents. Through its international overview it looks at developing practice in Europe, America and Australasia as well as the UK. Includes the role of research in relation to early intervention practice.

ISBN 1 85346 489 9

Price: £12.99

## RESOURCES

*All Join In*

A set of materials for making music with children and young people who have severe and profound learning disabilities. The pack includes songs, CD and teachers' notes with record keeping sheets, song cards and a book with simple arrangements for keyboard and guitar.

Price £42.95

Available from RNIB Book Sales Service. Tel: 0181 968 8600

*MOVE International Assessment Profiles (1996)*

Developed for use in conjunction with the MOVE Curriculum. The Profile includes the "Top Down Motor Milestone Test" and a Summary of Test Results along with instructions and activity sheets.

Cost: £4.00 per copy

Available from Move International (Europe), University of Wolverhampton, Wolverhampton, Gorway Road, Walsall WS1 3BD

*The CORE AAC Curriculum* written by speech and language therapists, teachers, AAC users who are members of the Centres of Regional Excellence (CORE) team.

Designed for professionals and carers working in a variety of settings with people who have little or no natural speech. It provides step-by-step methods to develop vocabulary; social skills; strategies for successful communication; self-expression; independence. It also includes an Initial Communication Profile and Assessment Record, a Communication Information Sheet, a Suggested Core Vocabulary to use with low and high technology aids.

ISBN 0 94682 840 7

Cost: £40.00 (Subsequent copies for individual use may be photocopied)

Available from: SCOPE, Library and Information, 12 Park Crescent  
London W1N 4EQ

## **COURSES AND CONFERENCES**

### **JUNE**

3rd Sexuality and Sexual Health Issues for Women  
to with Profound Learning Difficulties

4th Run by: Sex Education Team, Harperbury NHS Trust  
Venue: Sex Education Team Training Room, Harperbury  
Further details: Sex Education Team  
Tel: 01923 854861

10th Assessing Communication

Assessing and developing the communication skills of people who are preverbal.

Run by: Playtrac  
Venue: Playtrac Training Suite, Harperbury, Herts  
Further details: Playtrac Training Consultants  
Tel: 01923 854861

10th "Tuesday Training"

Introduction to visual disability in people with learning disabilities including guiding techniques and environmental considerations and adaptations.

Run by: Multiple Disability Training Service  
Venue: Llandrindod Wells  
Further details: Multiple Disability Training Service  
Tel: 0121 643 9912

11th M.O.V.E.

and A 2 day course accredited by MOVE International

12th Tutor: Alison Harland, Accredited trainer  
Run By: RNIB North  
Venue: Grosvenor House, Headingley, Leeds  
Further details: Julie Cook, Administrator EC North  
Tel: 0113 274 8855  
Fax: 0113 274 8800

16th Aromatherapy

and The benefits of using aromatherapy with people with learning disabilities.

17th Run by: Playtrac  
Tutor: R.D. Mogan  
Venue: Playtrac Training Suite, Harperbury, Herts  
Further details: Playtrac Training Consultants  
Tel: 01923 854 861

18th RNIB Leisure Resource Day

Run by: RNIB  
Venue: St. James's Park, Newcastle upon Tyne  
Further details: Gill Levy at RNIB  
Tel: 0171 388 1266

- 21st Sherborne Developmental Movement  
 Basic Introductory Course - Level 1 Part 1  
 Tutors: Becky Hallett and George Hill  
 Venue: Grimsbury Park School, Bristol  
 Further details: Sherborne Centre  
 Tel: 0117 961 0010
- 23rd Relaxation  
 Exploring the possibilities of using relaxation, simple massage and body awareness exercises with people with learning disabilities.  
 Run by: Playtrac Training Consultants  
 Venue: Playtrac Training Suite, Harperbury, Herts  
 Further details: Playtrac Training Consultants  
 Tel: 01923 854 861
- 25th Cultural Issues in Sexuality Work with People with Learning Difficulties  
 Run by: Sex Education Team, Harperbury NHS Trust  
 Venue: Sex Education Team Training Room, Harperbury  
 Further details: Sex Education Team,  
 Tel: 01923 854861

## JULY

- 1st RNIB Vision '97  
 \*Note  
 change of date  
 Wide range of suppliers of goods, services and advice including: technology companies, toy and equipment manufacturers, educational establishments; publishers, providing for people with visual impairment.  
 Run by: RNIB  
 Venue: Don Valley Stadium, Sheffield  
 Further details: Jenifer Makin, RNIB  
 Tel: 0171 388 1266
- 2nd Sexuality and Sexual Health Issues for Men with Profound Learning Difficulties  
 Run by: Sex Education Team, Harperbury NHS Trust  
 Venue: Sex Education Team Training Room, Harperbury  
 Further details: Sex Education Team  
 Tel: 01923 854861
- 8th IT Training Conference at the IT Training Show  
 Run by: Training Information Network  
 Venue: Birmingham NEC  
 Further details: Muriel Power, Conference organiser  
 01895 622 122  
 e-mail: info@train-net.co.uk
- 9th Assessing Communication  
 For details see above: 10th June
- 28th and 29th Introduction to M.O.V.E.  
 Tutor: Vivienne Mitchell  
 Run by: Whiston Hospital Physiotherapy/Occupational Therapy Dept.  
 Venue: Post-Graduate Medical Centre, Whiston Hospital, Prescot  
 Further details: June Smith, Whiston Hospital  
 0151 430 1879

## SEPTEMBER

- 2nd and 9th "Tuesday Training"  
 Introduction to visual disability in people with learning disabilities including guiding techniques and environmental considerations and adaptations.  
 Run by: Multiple Disability Training Service  
 Venue: Swansea  
 Further details: Multiple Disability Training Service  
 Tel: 0121 643 9912

- 5th Introduction to Intensive Interaction  
 Run by: Playtrac Training Consultants  
 Tutor: Andy Battell  
 Venue: Playtrac Training Suite, Harperbury, Herts  
 Further details: Playtrac Training Consultants  
 Tel: 01923 854 861
- 9th "Tuesday Training"  
 Introduction to visual disability in people with learning disabilities including guiding techniques and environmental considerations and adaptations.  
 Run by: Multiple Disability Training Service  
 Venue: Rhondda  
 Further details: Multiple Disability Training Service  
 Tel: 0121 643 9912
- 9th and 10th Practical Workshops  
 Two workshops can be chosen each day from a range of themes: Taking control; Multisensory work; Gardening and cookery; Alternative communication; Basic Literacy and numeracy; Whole body activities; Life skills; Developing interaction.  
 Run by: Orchard Hill FE College, Carshalton  
 Venue: Orchard Hill FE College  
 Further details: Andrew Lindup  
 Tel: 0181 770 8125  
 Fax: 0181 642 3763
- 14th to 17th *bild* International Conference 1997 Services challenged by complex needs?  
 The conference will focus on complex needs and learning disability. Specific research interests and areas of professional good practice will be identified.  
 Venue: Manchester  
 Further details: Karen Clarke  
 BILD, Wolverhampton Road, Kidderminster DY10 3PP  
 Tel: 01562 850251
- 15th and 16th Aromatherapy  
 The benefits of using aromatherapy with people with learning disabilities.  
 Run by: Playtrac  
 Tutor: R.D. Mogan  
 Venue: Playtrac Training Suite, Harperbury, Herts  
 Further details: Playtrac Training Consultants  
 Tel: 01923 854 861
- 23rd "Tuesday Training"  
 Introduction to visual disability in people with learning disabilities including guiding techniques and environmental considerations and adaptations.  
 Run by: Multiple Disability Training Service  
 Venue: London  
 Further details: Multiple Disability Training Service  
 Tel: 0121 643 9912

## NOVEMBER

- 19th Differentiation: Including Pupils with PMLD  
 Run by: NASEN  
 Venue: London (exact venue to be confirmed)  
 Further details: NASEN  
 Tel: 01827 311 500  
 Fax: 01827 313 005

## MARCH 1988

- 4th Differentiation: Including Pupils with PMLD  
 Run by: NASEN  
 Venue: Manchester (exact venue to be confirmed)  
 Further details: NASEN  
 Tel: 01827 311 500  
 Fax: 01827 313 005



## **EXHIBITIONS and EVENTS**

8th to Independent Living Exhibition  
9th Run by: Reed Exhibitions  
August Venue: Sandown Park, Esher  
Further details: Reed Exhibition Companies  
Tel: 0181 910 783

26th Independent Living Exhibition (Supported by Naidex)  
to Run by: Reed Exhibitions  
27th Venue: Doncaster Exhibition Centre, Doncaster  
Sept. Further details: Reed Exhibition Companies  
Tel: 0181 910 7873

### SCOPE Leisure Resource Centre OPEN DAYS

Permanent displays of play, sport and craft equipment, with library, and video collection. On open days there will be demonstrations and a range of activities for people to participate in, including adapted games, music and art activities.

Dates: Saturday 14th June  
Thursday 10th July  
Tuesday 16th September  
Saturday 11th October  
Wednesday 12th November  
Tuesday 2nd December  
Venue: Scope Leisure Resource Centre, Redditch  
Further information: Nick Lee or Lesley Butcher  
Tel: 01527 550909  
Fax: 01527 550808

## **LONG COURSES**

### Diploma in Information Technology for Special Needs (by distance learning)

C.A.S.E. Unit of Keele University

1 year distance learning course in theory and use of IT for people with special needs, especially children/adults with learning disability.

The course comprises 6 printed Modules for self study with linked practical exercises, computer conferencing discussions and tutorial support.. There are two 5-day residential periods at Keele University.

Course content enquiries to Dr. Joh Heggarty, Tel: (direct) 01782 583386

Starts: September 1997

Cost: £850

Application forms from: Postgraduate Admissions  
Academic Affairs Department  
Keele University Keele  
Staffordshire ST5 5BG  
Telephone: 01782 584002  
Fax: 01782 632343

### Masters/Postgraduate Diploma in Learning Disability Studies

Department of Psychiatry, University of Birmingham Medical School

Part-time modular course for professionals involved in services for children or adults with a learning disability.

One afternoon per week for 2 years (Postgraduate diploma) with a third year of teaching and research (Masters in Medical Science). Sessions are led by professionals from a range of disciplines and provide opportunities to participate in, and contribute to interdisciplinary learning in a collaborative setting.

Further details from Dr. Stuart Cumella or Helen Bradley Tel: 0121 627 2853  
at the Department of Psychiatry, Queen Elizabeth Psychiatric Hospital, Mindelsohn Way, Edgbaston, Birmingham B15 2QZ