



DAS ENGLISH LANGUAGE & LITERACY DIVISION





DAS English Language and Literacy Division

"To map the way for young dyslexics to live a life of beauty and promise through a comprehensive, high quality service provided by inspired professionals"

The English Language Literacy & Language division provides intensive intervention in English Literacy including the comprehensive Main Literacy Programme and educational technology-infused lessons to best engage our learners.

English Language and Literacy Division Programme Evaluation

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Dyslexia Association of Singapore*

ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERACY (ELL) DIVISION

The English Language and Literacy (ELL) Division is focused on helping learners with dyslexia overcome their challenges with English while enabling them through their individual strengths.

ELL, therefore, develops English language and literacy programmes and resources, enhance current intervention to ensure that it remains beneficial for learners with Dyslexia, prepares teachers and guides the implementation of appropriate intervention and evaluates the effectiveness of the programmes under the division.

Currently, there are 3 programmes offered under ELL:

1. The Main Literacy Programme (MLP)
2. iReaCH (launched in March 2019)
3. iStudySmart (launched in July 2019)

DAS Main Literacy Programme (MLP)

"To map the way for young dyslexics to live a life of beauty and promise through a comprehensive, high quality service provided by inspired professionals"

Curriculum Framework - MLP provides a comprehensive and quality curriculum that supports dyslexic students facing literacy challenges in a positive learning environment, engages parents and other stakeholders to ensure the success of our students.

MLP Learning Components

- ◆ Language and Vocabulary
- ◆ Phonemic Awareness
- ◆ Phonics
- ◆ Morphology
- ◆ Reading Fluency
- ◆ Listening/Reading Comprehension
- ◆ Writing

MLP Learning Principles

- ◆ To promote and facilitate reading and spelling development
- ◆ To equip students with the essential comprehension skills needed to draw inferences
- ◆ To accentuate the importance of reading fluency through the deliberate planning of reading tasks that takes into account students' reading fluency and accuracy
- ◆ To emphasize vocabulary development of sight and high frequency word through instructions leveraging on Edu-Technology
- ◆ To develop diverse and localised manuals, materials and resources to cater to the learning needs of students

MLP Teaching Resources

- ◆ Language and Vocabulary pack
- ◆ Phonemic Awareness and Phonics pack
- ◆ Morphology pack
- ◆ Grammar for Writing pack
- ◆ Advanced Writing pack
- ◆ Listening/Reading Comprehension pack

1. INTRODUCTION TO THE MAIN LITERACY PROGRAMME (MLP)

[a] Background of Programme

The Dyslexia Association of Singapore's (DAS) mission is to help families and individuals impacted by dyslexia to achieve. The DAS has adopted the Professional Practice Guidelines (PPG) definition of dyslexia which recognises it to be a specific learning difficulty of language learning and cognition that primarily affects accurate and fluent word reading and spelling skills with associated difficulties in phonological awareness, verbal memory and processing speed (Ministry of Education, 2011). By default, the Main Literacy Programme (MLP) students require a diagnosis of dyslexia by a registered psychologist to receive help at the DAS.

MLP offers intervention, taught in accordance to Orton-Gillingham (OG) principles, which is language-based, cognitive, structured, sequential and cumulative, multisensory, diagnostic and prescriptive and emotionally sound. It aims to equip students with the necessary skills and strategies delivered explicitly to help them cope with their literacy challenges in the areas of reading, spelling, reading fluency, listening/reading comprehension and writing.

For more information about the OG approach, do visit this YouTube video:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZDLxcUNpCzQ>

MLP focuses on these elements:

- ◆ the recommended areas of instruction for learners with dyslexia (National Reading Panel, 2000; Rose, 2009)
- ◆ individualised group lessons taught in accordance to the OG principles (Ritchey & Goeke, 2006; Rose & Zirkel, 2007) and modified in view of institutional and funding limitations
- ◆ a suggested framework of information bearing in mind cultural sensitivities and emphasising conceptual teaching of language components as "[k]nowledge organisation is one element that has been used to differentiate novices from experts" (Ridgeway & Dunston, 2000)

[b] Our Vision

Acquisition of literacy skills is more than managing school, it's to manage and live life with possibilities. MLP not only looks to provide students with literacy skills but as an important by-product of its intervention, MLP looks to instil them with the belief that they indeed can and deserve a future that is as beautiful as a child's dream, one that is full of promise – a potential that is not limited by their dyslexia but

instead enhanced by it, once they've been given the tools to overcome their challenges and by identifying and nurturing their talents.

Given the responsibility of enabling our learners to achieve and recognising what is at stake, MLP has set itself very high goals and continuously looks towards enhancing its service, both in coverage of knowledge and skills as well as in quality. Not to be forgotten, the dedicated team of MLP educational therapists are reminded of the value of their roles in the lives of these children and through their commitment to the cause, help our learners form these dreams and make them a reality.

Hence, MLP's vision remains consistently clear:

To map the way for young dyslexics to live a life of beauty and promise through a comprehensive high quality service, provided by inspired professionals.

Programme Description

MLP comprises three main functions: Admissions, Curriculum Development and Enhancement and Quality Assurance.

The main roles of the various departments are summarised below:

- ◆ Admissions – A team of psychologists from the SpLD Assessment Services (SAS) Division participates in screening of learners to enable identification of at-risk students. Upon receipt of applications from parents, schools and other professionals supporting learners, specialist and educational psychologists conduct assessments to formally diagnose the needs of learners, and subsequently, make placement referrals for intervention. A team of administrative staff support the referral process as well as bursary needs of students who may require financial assistance.
- ◆ Curriculum Development and Enhancement – A team of experienced senior and lead educational therapists regularly evaluate the current curriculum and its relevance based on profiles of students and recommended intervention by the Admissions team. Further development, implementation and enhancement of the curriculum are based on these evaluations and proposals for additional programmes within the curriculum are also considered so that all students equally benefit from MLP.

- ◆ Educational Advisory – A team of educational advisors conducts a needs analysis so that they can assist with the development and support of educators through broad-based support as well as intensive remediation guidance. The evaluation of educator performance and the formulation of further training to develop them further ensures that educators can effectively translate the curriculum to meet the needs of their learners. Additionally, through progress monitoring of students and their graduation, this department keeps its view on the quality of the programme through the learners

[c] Banding - to meet the needs of the learners

In 2013, MLP introduced banding as a way to ensure that:

- ◆ Student's learning needs are matched with the level of teaching within the MLP curriculum
- ◆ Educational targets are set at the start of the intervention and adjusted as the student progresses through the MLP curriculum.
- ◆ Teaching is more responsive to the student's changing literacy profile so that measures can be put in place to address any lack of response to intervention.
- ◆ Programme evaluation can occur and quality assurance standards can be met
- ◆ Student's graduation from MLP is based on his / her progress from his / her initial banding

In grouping existing students, psychologists utilised available information from the students' psychological reports to position them as best benefiting from either the Band A, B or C curriculum - in other words, what are the more urgent requirements in the provision of intervention for that child. Within each band, there are three levels of literacy learning, making it nine levels in total. Each year, MLP monitors and seeks to understand the needs of students who are referred to its programme, knowing that each dyslexic student is different at different stages in their educational journey and some may require more intensive forms of support (e.g. speech and language therapy) or a different emphasis of teaching (e.g., more language based work versus more literacy based work).

For instance, Band A covers emergent literacy skills and students who are assigned to be in this band typically have language or cognitive weaknesses that co-occur with their dyslexia. They often show emergent literacy skills, such as having some awareness of the alphabet, how letters are formed, how text goes across the page from left to right and being able to read and spell some basic words. These students

need support in boosting their listening and speaking skills while improving their literacy foundations. They may also need a slower pace of learning, with more opportunities for repetition.

Band B, on the other hand, covers functional literacy skills and students who are placed in this band would likely have fairly developed language skills but significant basic literacy difficulties. They may have some reading and spelling skills of familiar words but struggle with understanding and applying letter-sound correspondence rules in reading and spelling new words. They also have reading fluency, reading comprehension and paragraph writing difficulties.

Band C covers functional to advanced literacy skills and students who are placed in this band would likely have fairly developed language skills and some functional literacy skills but continue to struggle with reading fluency, reading comprehension and composition writing.

2. MLP IN NUMBERS

2018 (Jan - Dec)											
Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
2802	2842	2866	2909	2892	2933	3039	3033	3082	3108	2811	2776

3. RESEARCH CONDUCTED

[a] Main Literacy Programme (MLP) Enhanced Reading Comprehension Curriculum

The changing needs, profiles and demands of the students on the Main Literacy Programme (MLP) as well as the need to keep abreast with the mainstream curriculum were instrumental in the efforts to enhance the reading comprehension curriculum. The enhanced curriculum includes not only the skills and concepts essential in supporting students with varying profiles and age groups (primary and secondary), it also includes techniques and methods to teach reading comprehension in a structured and explicit way that benefits students with dyslexia.

Reading comprehension is defined as the “process of simultaneously extracting and constructing meaning through interaction and involvement with written language” (Snow, 2002). Apart from experiencing difficulty in reading, spelling and writing, learners with dyslexia also struggle significantly with comprehending texts that involve higher-order thinking processes which are critical to helping them make meaningful connections. Thus, a systematic and structured teaching approach through the employment of annotation was put in place to teach reading comprehension to students, to ensure that they are well guided and supported to cope with the exacting demands of reading comprehension.

[b] Reading Comprehension and Annotation

Research findings have supported the importance of careful modelling, scaffolding and active text-annotation to improve comprehension (Fowler & Barker, 1974). This is especially so for students with learning differences to better encourage active participation as well as promote greater maintenance and transference of skills and strategies. Annotation, a writing-to-learn strategy for use while reading or rereading, is highly encouraged to help readers develop a greater and deeper engagement with the text and in turn, promote active reading. Explicit and direct instruction ensures structure, clarity, careful task sequencing and guidance- all of these are essential in supporting students with dyslexia.

Most proficient readers are able to make use of their intuitive knowledge to help them make sense of the text they read and thus, are able to understand and interpret the writer’s intent and his approach to conveying his thoughts and ideas effectively. However, less proficient readers may not possess this intuitive knowledge and therefore, need to be trained with a more concrete and explicit technique of interpreting texts such as annotation to help them understand the contents of the text. Annotating a text helps readers pay attention to both grammatical features and vocabulary that are crucial in helping them connect related ideas and interpret more accurately what they are reading.

While most students do recognise the importance of annotation, unfortunately, most of them do not follow through because they may not know how to go about annotating the text in a manner that helps them understand more easily what they are reading. Therefore, when teaching reading comprehension to students on MLP, cohesive devices and vocabulary are two main areas of emphasis that teachers will highlight as they guide and scaffold the lessons to help them to interpret texts meaningfully.

[c] Main Literacy Programme (MLP) 's Progress Monitoring

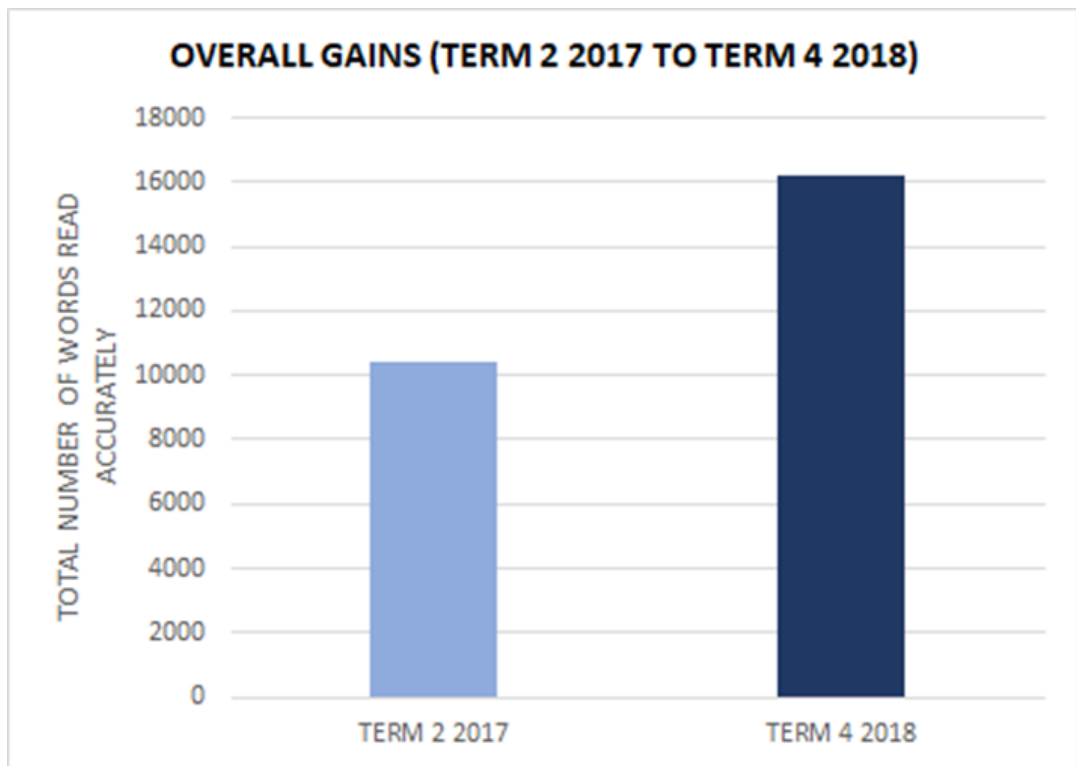
Following admission, students' cognitive and literacy profiles are further analysed to assign a band (Ram et.al., 2015) for their educational placement within the programme enabling MLP to offer individualised lessons taught in accordance to the Orton-Gillingham Principles (Ritchey & Goeke, 2006; Rose & Zirkel, 2007). Each band has three levels of literacy learning, making it a total of nine levels across bands "A" to "C". There are four core skills that are covered in cumulation - from emergent to functional to advanced literacy skills - across these bands; they are phonics/ morphology, language & vocabulary, reading comprehension and writing. Students' progress across these skills is then monitored using digitised Curriculum Based Assessments (CBAs).

The rate of progression across the four skills is not expected to be uniform - owing to varying student profiles and ensuing curriculum. In a previously conducted study (Nair, Ram & Kurusamy, 2018) it was observed that the Band A students generally made the most significant progress in reading. The current study aims to check if the reading gains made by Band A students still holds true and to further analyse the profile of the learners making the reading gains.

In 2018, we did a study to evaluate the Reading Gains made by our learners. We selected students who joined us in Term 1, 2017. We had to have a cut-off for selection because we wanted to avoid practice effect whereby familiarity with the tests can increase the overall score. We then measured the total number of words read in Term 2, 2017 by the cohort of students against the total number of words read in Term 4, 2018 by the same cohort, i.e. we measured the reading progress made by these students over a period of 2 years (4 rounds of CBAs). Students were tested using Curriculum Based Assessments and they were tested on single word reading accuracy.

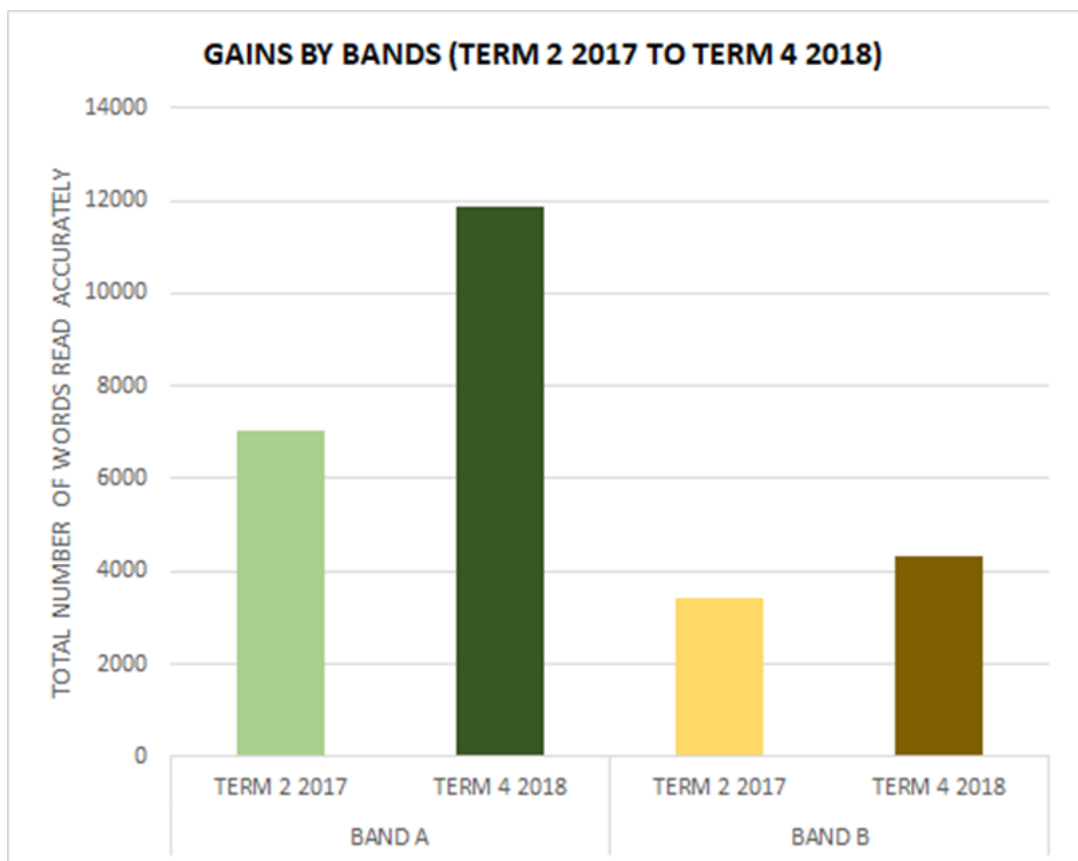
The following statements elaborate on the overall reading gains over 3 semesters:

- ◆ The students' word reading accuracy scores from the first round of CBAs - conducted in Term 2 2017 - were measured against the final round in the year long period of study - conducted in Term 4 2018 - in order to check if the gains made remained consistent over an extended period of time
- ◆ The reading gains made post 3 semesters of intervention were significant



Reading Gains Made by Band over Period of Study

- ◆ There was a 55.44% increase in the overall reading scores which translates to an approximate 3.08% increase per month of intervention
- ◆ Students were split into two groups - Band A and Band B - based on their entry banding
- ◆ The aggregate reading gains made by students in each band category from the first round of CBAs - conducted in Term 2 2017 - were measured against the final round in the year long period of study - conducted in Term 4 2018 - in order to confirm for the learner profile that made the most gains
- ◆ Band A students showed a 69.13% increase in their aggregate reading gains while Band B students showed only 27.16% increase
- ◆ In the 3 semesters of intervention, gains made by Band A students were the most significant



This result is in-line with a 2017 internal study.

In 2017, a study was conducted on Teacher Perception and Student Progress. The results from the study revealed the following:

- ◆ Band A students made better progress in both Word Reading and Word spelling than Band B students
- ◆ EdTs are more confident in supporting the lower functioning students than the higher functioning ones
- ◆ EdTs believe that Band A would make the most progress amongst the 3 bands.

The result from this 2018 study revealed the following:

- ◆ Increased reading progress among Band A learners suggests that explicit, foundational phonics instruction for lower ability levels result in more evident progress in reading.
- ◆ Band B encompasses more complex phonics concepts, hence perhaps reading tasks take longer to learn as they are more challenging to attain.
- ◆ Teacher perceptions on lower banded students' needs could continue to be an influence in the adequacy of support given to higher banded students (Nair, Ram & Kurusamy, 2018)

The above revelation from the two research warrants further investigation and also to identify if there are training gaps and support for EdTs to support students in the other bands.

Other potential areas of investigations that we are considering are:

- ◆ Within Band A itself there are further 3 sub-divisions - Band A1, Band A2 and Band A3. To find out which of these bands made the most significant progress.
- ◆ To form a new sample and conduct a second round of data collection and analysis, with the following in mind:
 - ◇ Sort students into groups based on school levels, uniform learner profiles and take note of diagnosed co-occurring issues
 - ◇ Parent questionnaire on additional support provided
- ◆ To measure reading and include spelling gains over a longer period of intervention and tracking of long-term progress
- ◆ Evaluation of impact made in other cumulative skills (eg. writing)
- ◆ Evaluation of impact made in all the band relevant skills under each band category

4. ENSURING THE QUALITY OF THE PROGRAMME

[a] Annual Quality Assurance audits

DAS Quality Assurance audit is an annual process that all Educational Therapists teaching under the Main Literacy Programme have to undergo. The Quality Assurance audits are conducted by the Educational Advisors.

For FY2018-2019, 2 types of Quality Assurance Audits took place:

(1) Lesson Delivery Audit

- ◆ Lesson Delivery audits have been in place since 2014. From 2017 a newly revamped audit form has been used to assess the quality of teaching.
 - ◇ This new form includes scoring according to the different bandings as the components taught differ across the bands, i.e. band appropriate marking was adopted.

(2) Documentation Audit

- ◆ Documentation audit - trial documentation audits were conducted in 2015 - 2016. After conducting these audits, the audit results were reviewed and the forms used for the audit were critically analysed and a new form was created.
 - ◇ One important change made to the form was the grading of quality lesson plans, the grading was aligned with the KPI grading outlined by HR.

It is a requirement that all EdTs teaching under the Main Literacy Programme (MLP) must be audited once for each financial year. They must receive at least a “Met Requirements” score for that financial year.

In situations, where the Educational Therapists do not meet with the requirements, they will be provided with individual support and training to help them. A follow-up audit will be carried out after the refresher training/support or after 1 term. If the EdT fails to meet the necessary criteria again during the repeat lesson observation or documentation audit despite the training/support given, he or she would be deemed to have failed to meet the Key Performance Indicator set for them for that Financial year.

[b] Broad base support

An Educational Advisor is stationed at every Learning Centre to provide support to all Educational Therapists. They are readily available to provide support and advice to all who need it.

For novice Educational Therapists, the support provided will be in the foundational area of developing their teaching skills. For mid-level and experienced Educational Therapists, the Educational Advisor is readily available to provide advice in the areas of professionalism, research project and etc.

Ever so often, Educational Therapists might need an extra pair of eyes to observe and provide feedback to them on their teaching and help them deliver a more effective lesson. In such cases, they can request for observation by an Educational Advisor. At any point, if the Educational Therapists feel they would like to have feedback or support in any area of their job, they can approach the Educational Advisors.

The Educational Advisors have provided support to Educational Therapists in the following areas:

- ◆ Lesson planning
- ◆ Lesson Delivery
- ◆ Behavioural management
- ◆ In-class observations of teaching
- ◆ Co-teaching
- ◆ Individual time-table planning and scheduling
- ◆ Differentiating lessons to help support their students
- ◆ How to meet with the Key Performance Indicators that have been set for them
- ◆ Handling students with social and emotional issues
- ◆ Conducting Parent-Teacher meetings
- ◆ Report writing
- ◆ Parent engagement and communication
- ◆ Student engagement
- ◆ Progress monitoring of students
- ◆ Centre sharing

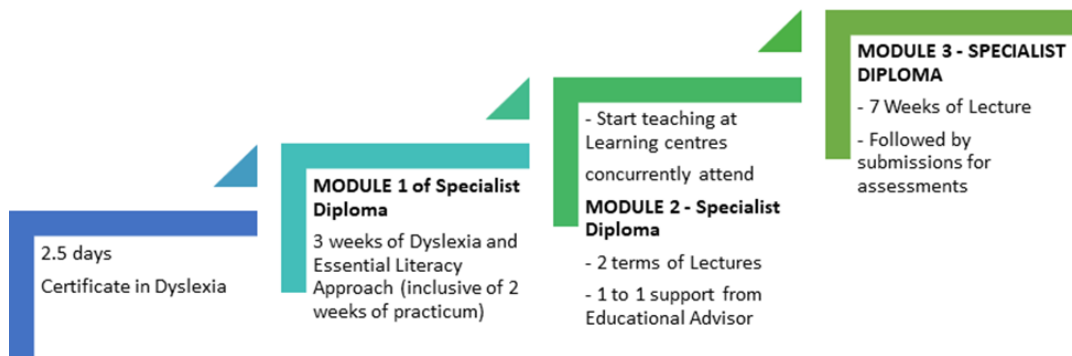
5. TEACHER TRAINING

For 2018 - we recruited 2 batches of Educational Therapists. One batch in February 2018 and another in June 2018. The recruitment breakdown is as follows:

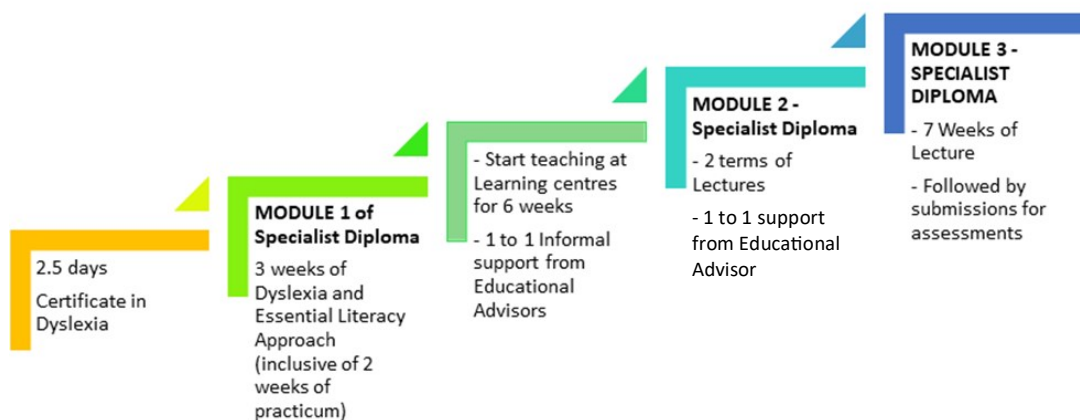
- ♦ February 2018 - 4 full-time Educational Therapists
- ♦ June 2018 - 4 full time Educational Therapists

Owing to the different recruitment timelines, the 2 batches of Educational Therapists have a slightly varied training timeline.

For the February 2018 batch the training is as follows:



For the June 2018 batch the training is as follows:



The subtle difference in training mode is that Educational Therapists in the June batch will start teaching first and then attend Module 2 of their Specialist Diploma in the following term. However, during the term whereby they do not have lectures - they will still be receiving informal support from Educational Advisors.

6. NEW INITIATIVES TAKEN FOR 2018

The DAS has supported more than 11000 students since 1993 and we've consistently received requests, especially in recent years, for more support in the following areas:

- ◆ a targeted Reading Comprehension and Writing programme to better support the students to cope with the increasing demands in the school curricula
- ◆ A Study Skills programme to equip students with the necessary tools and strategies as they prepare to transition into tertiary level education.

Therefore, besides the Main Literacy Programme (MLP), the DAS English Language and Literacy (ELL) Division has recently launched two new programmes, iReaCH and iStudySmart to cater to the learning needs of our students today.

[a] iReaCH

The primary aim of iReaCH is to support students in Reading Comprehension and Writing and enable them to manage higher order tasks expected of them in school through the deliberate use of vocabulary instruction and educational technology. The teaching principles emphasised in the development and the delivery of iReaCH adhere closely to the Orton-Gillingham (OG) principles to enable students with dyslexia learn efficiently and effectively.

iReaCH is developed not only to provide upper primary and secondary school students the skills and content knowledge to improve their reading comprehension and writing skills, it also aims to increase their confidence and preparedness to cope with the curriculum demands in school.

Aligned with the mainstream curriculum, the employment of vocabulary instruction coupled with the appropriate use of educational technology encourage learners to become confident and inquisitive knowledge seekers.

Presented by the English Language and Literacy Division
that has brought you the Main Literacy Programme:



iReaCH™

WHAT?

The primary aim of iReaCH™ is to support learners in Reading Comprehension and Writing to manage higher order tasks expected of them in school through deliberate use of vocabulary instruction and educational technology.

The teaching principles emphasised in the development and the delivery of iReaCH™ adhere closely to the Orton-Gillingham (OG) principles to enable learners with dyslexia learn efficiently and effectively.

READING COMPREHENSION

VOCABULARY INSTRUCTION

EDUCATIONAL TECHNOLOGY

WRITING SKILLS

START:
Term 1, 2019

WHO?
Primary 5 to Secondary 5
students with Dyslexia

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON iReaCH™
CALL 6444 5700
or ANY DAS LEARNING CENTRES

OR VISIT US AT WWW.DAS.ORG.SG/SERVICES/ABOUT-OUR-SERVICES/ENGLISH-LANGUAGE-LITERACY-PROGRAMMES





iStudySmart™

EQUIPPING STUDENTS WITH THE ESSENTIAL STUDY SKILLS



MODULES

TIME MANAGEMENT AND PRIORITISATION SKILLS

PLANNING AND ORGANISATION SKILLS

TERTIARY WRITING SKILLS

PRESENTATION SKILLS



Designed for
**SEC 4/5 & TERTIARY STUDENTS
WITH DYSLEXIA**

FEES: \$16.85/HR PER TERM

(inclusive of GST)

Students must complete full 2 terms.

BURSARIES AVAILABLE*

WHAT'S UNIQUE ABOUT iStudySmart™?

- ✓ Blended learning
- ✓ Personalised feedback
- ✓ Integrates the use of virtual reality (VR) devices



DOWNLOAD THE APPLICATION FORM
[TINYURL.COM/APPLYDAS](https://tinyurl.com/applydas)
AND SUBMIT IT TO ENROL@DAS.ORG.SG



FOR MORE INFORMATION ON iStudySmart™

CALL 6444 5700

(Mon to Fri: 9.00am to 5.30pm)

[b] iStudySmart™

In our constant efforts to develop and enhance programmes that cater not only to the students' learning needs but also to keep up with changing times and demands in the education landscape, iStudySmart, a blended learning programme, is developed for secondary 4/5 students with dyslexia embarking on their post secondary education as well as tertiary students with dyslexia already in institutes of higher learning. Lessons are delivered through blended learning where it combines both face-to-face consultations to provide personalised feedback and e-learning where the content is easily accessible online for the students to learn and progress at their own pace.

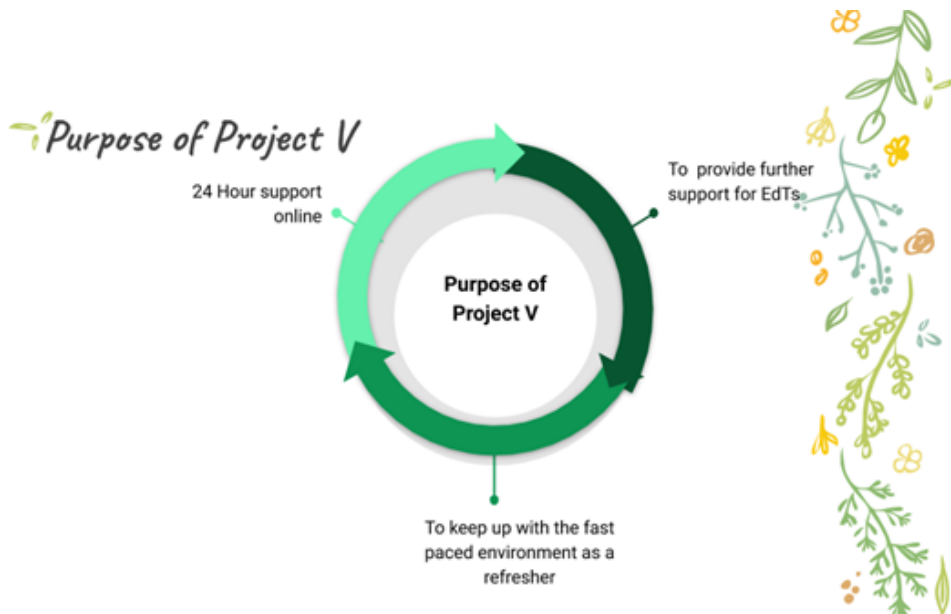
The employment of effective study skills techniques is essential especially for students with learning differences to enable them to overcome challenges in the academic environment. Hence, the iStudySmart programme aims to empower students in the areas of time management and prioritisation, planning and organisation, tertiary writing and presentation skills.

Further, in order to make learning more immersive and experiential for the students, Virtual Reality (VR) has been incorporated into the presentation module where students will have an opportunity to use the Virtual Reality (VR) headset to practise their speech, in preparation for their live presentation.

iStudySmart was trialled in Term 4, 2018 over a period of 10 weeks. It culminated in a live presentation put up by the students. The event, graced and supported by families, caregivers and educational therapists, was an astounding success where a range of relevant and thought-provoking topics were presented that day. Some of the topics include:

- ◇ 'Climate Change and its death effects on Mother Nature'
- ◇ 'The Importance of Raising Awareness on Mental Health to Promote Inclusivity'
- ◇ 'Sleep Deprivation and its impacts on one's health and well-being'
- ◇ 'The Importance of Adopting and Maintaining a Healthy Lifestyle'

Preparing our students for the future is an important role of education and therefore, through iStudySmart, it is with hope that our students will be able to stand in good stead and better prepare themselves as they make the transition into IHLs and beyond. Hence, the iStudySmart soft launch- an expanded content will be rolled out in 2019 over two terms, Term 3 & 4 to support more students in becoming independent and successful individuals.



[c] Project V

A new initiative has been undertaken by the Educational Advisors (EA) in 2018. The EAs provide many platforms of support for lesson delivery, documentation, behaviour management, parent communication and etc. to all Educational Therapists.

However, we realised that the support given may be considered “one dimensional”. It is a face to face support and at scheduled timings. We needed to give them a more holistic and flexible support, at times which are convenient. A platform whereby Educational Therapists are able to turn to if they feel that they need to improve their competency, a platform for them to seek clarity at their own time and pace. Hence, Project V was born.

It is an e-learning platform for Educational Therapists slated to be launched in 2019. Some of the modules that are in the pipeline are:

- ◆ Review - card drill to dictation
- ◆ Reading Comprehension - Personification, Metaphors and Irony
- ◆ Parent communication

[d] CalmEd

Another initiative that will be launched for all Educational Therapists is CalmEd. It is an interdisciplinary well-being initiative for Educational Therapists by Educational Therapists at the DAS. It aims to empower Educators through integrating mindfulness techniques in their craft, creating fulfilling experiences.

With all the stresses that our Educational Therapists go through each day we hope that through this initiative the Educational Therapists can create a state of calm awareness of the present moment- to help them cope and improve emotional control, cognitive function and physical well-being.

Brain-imaging studies have shown that long-term mindfulness training can help thicken the cortical regions related to attention and sensory processing, and may offset thinning of those areas that typically comes with aging and stress. A considerable body of evidence with adult populations indicates that mindfulness, a particular way of deploying attention and awareness in the present moment without emotional reaction or conceptual judgment, is instrumental in helping adults reduce stress, regulate emotion, and thereby improve their health and well-being (Carmody & Baer, 2008; Grossman, Niemann, Schmidt, & Walach, 2004).

CalmEd kicked off its pilot project with Educational Advisors to investigate how else mindfulness-based approaches can bolster the well-being of our educators. Currently all Educational Advisors are undergoing weekly training to incorporate mindfulness into their routine. These mindfulness tips will soon be shared with all Educational Therapists.

From February 2019 onwards, weekly mindfulness reminders have been sent out to everyone at DAS, encouraging deliberate mindfulness practices - the aim is for everyone to start focussing on the positives and not to dwell in the negative aspects in life.

“With all the stresses that our Educational Therapists go through each day we hope that through this initiative the Educational Therapists can create a state of calm awareness of the present moment- to help them cope and improve emotional control, cognitive function and physical well-being.

[e] Holding hands with Technology: M-Learning Week and Appy Hour

M-Learning Week (MLW) happens twice a year, in term 1 and term 3. During MLW, MLP EdTs post pictures or videos of their EdTech integration in the classrooms.

Usually, each round sees about 250 new posts. These posts serve as an indication of the level of use and proficiency in the integration of EdTech resources; and also inspire all MLP colleagues as they share and learn from each other.

Appy Hour is the reverse of MLW, whereby the EdTech team conducts sharing sessions, including hands on activities in the LCs and the EdTs discuss how they see the tools being implemented in their classrooms. The iReps, the MLP technology integration champions, facilitate this constructive discussion with suggestions on getting around the usage and management of the tools.





Charis Chiong Zi Qi
DAS ELL EdTs

36w

Originally shared by Charis Chiong Zi Qi

Sequencing activity on something they are very familiar with! #MLPedtech #DASmlp #welldonewednesday #SAMR



03/09/2018
2 Photos - View album



Nithyashree Murthy
das.org.sg

11w

Working on spelling words with er, ir and ur.
#MLWT12019



26/02/2019
2 Photos - View album

EDUCATIONAL THERAPIST COMMENTS

I used the apps for Language and vocabulary component to reinforce a concept of skill. I've used them to create quizzes. I find quizzz the most useful as it helps my lower ability students to have the audio aid when they are unable to read. In addition, it allows downloading of data for documentation purposes. Plickers was kind of troublesome with having to prepare the papers for each student, My students didn't enjoy using plickers for quizzes.

Teaching vocabulary to 14–15 year olds. Band A3–B4. Students were engaged. If it is pen and paper work sometimes they drift off. As activities are time and need their full attention they seemed to be more engaged.

I tried Quizzizz, which is a different version of Kahoot, and my students and I loved it for several reasons. Students get to answer the questions in their own time without feeling pressured, music was soothing and we're able to go through questions after the end of the quiz

8. ENGAGEMENT AND AWARENESS

In order to share what we do at the DAS, to build a community of practice, to create a knowledge sharing culture with like-minded professionals as well as to keep abreast with current perspectives and best practices, the ELL team conducts Learning Journeys and Awareness talks for teachers, school leaders, psychologists as well as Allied Educators (AEDs). Through such talks and learning journeys, we are able to raise awareness and increase the visibility of ELL's Main Literacy Programme (MLP) as well as our 2 new programmes iReaCH and iStudySmart™. The intent of such professional sharing is to exchange good teaching practices, perspectives and strategies on how we, as professionals in the special needs community, can better support students with SpLDs.

ELL talks conducted for 2018:

DATE	ORGANISATION	SPEAKER	AUDIENCE	PAX
14 Aug 2018	Temasek Polytechnic	Ashraf and Geetha	Teachers	30
18 Oct 2018	W3 AED Cluster (Learning Journey)	Geetha, Serena and Hamada	Teachers	13
7 Nov 2018	North & North East Cluster (Learning Journey)	Mike, Serena and Rosalyn	Teachers	7
20 Nov 2018	Junyuan Primary School - Part 2	Serena	Teachers	18

9. TESTIMONIALS

Students' Reflections on how MLP has helped them cope with their literacy challenges

"Over the years, DAS has been a big part of my journey in picking up literacy skills and learning English. I have learnt many new vocabulary and writing techniques to help me with school projects and other non-curricular activities. Without DAS I would not have overcome the many obstacles I faced over the years of learning."

"It is hard to put into words how much I have changed since attending lessons at the DAS. The tremendous improvements I've made in my reading and writing were made possible with the support and help received from my teachers and classmates at the DAS. I cannot see myself being the same person I am today if I had not received intervention and support."

"DAS has helped me improve in many aspects of my English language, such as reading, spelling, comprehension, compositions and vocabulary building. I am thankful to the teachers who have been very patient with me, as I take time to read and spell words. My 5 years in DAS has been a fruitful experience."

Before I joined DAS 4 years ago, my reading and writing was horrible. I used to mix up letters and numbers until I attended lessons here and my reading and writing skills have improved ever since. My vocabulary expanded and I can read more fluently than before. I am also very grateful for the friendships I have forged with other students here. I want to say a big thank you to all the teachers who taught me.

It has been a very rewarding journey in DAS as I have gained valuable skills and knowledge. I am glad that my literacy skills have improved tremendously and I become more independent in my academics. I am thankful to my teacher for her dedication and support.

When I first stepped into DAS, I felt very nervous as I was afraid that my classmates would not like me. However, my classmates and teacher were very friendly and welcoming, which made me open up to them. I would definitely miss my teacher and classmates that have shaped me for 5 years. Now that I am graduating, I have gained so much knowledge about the English Language and have made many close friends in my class. I feel 100% more confident now, compared to the time I first stepped into DAS. Now I can share the knowledge with my peers in school and my family at home.

10. A SUCCESS STORY

YAA winner 2018 - Emily Yap. A Year 3 Ngee Ann Polytechnic student and former DAS student:

Emily Yap was struggling with her English from her primary school days. She used to get 2 out of 10 for her spelling and her school teacher used to reprimand her in front of her classmates. Some of her teachers encouraged her to continue to try harder and do their best to motivate her. Despite the encouragement and also working very hard after school and on weekends, she still did not fare well and was very discouraged.

Her parents have always remained supportive and encouraging. They always advised her not to give up but to give her best.



When she was in Sec 1, she came to DAS for an assessment. She was diagnosed with dyslexia and she started her remediation classes at DAS.

“My DAS teacher would come up with creative and fun ways to introduce new concepts and coping strategies, which were helpful to me and motivated me to work harder. In time, I moved on from normal academic to express stream in school. I completed my O’ levels and took up nursing, which I was most passionate about, at Ngee Ann Polytechnic.

Nursing to me is not just an occupation to care for those who are in need, but it’s also a great way to give back to society. I scored a GPA of 3.8 when taking my nursing course and I was pleasantly surprised when I was placed on the Director’s list (a list where top students are shortlisted for). I also received an Edusave Certificate of Academic Achievement award and an Edusave Good Progress award in 2018.

Dyslexia, to me, is not a pigeonhole where there are limitations and constraints. It creates opportunities and possibilities as we learn differently. We have extraordinary brains that process information differently from an average person. We should not hold back our efforts and ideas. Therefore, one should never assume that you cannot achieve but make efforts to redefine your limits and move on, going beyond what you thought was impossible. And most of all, never give up!”

ABOUT THE AUTHORS



GEETHA SHANTHA RAM

Director of SpLD Assessment Services, English Language and Literacy Division, & Staff Professional Development and Head of Research

Geetha Shantha Ram joined DAS on 16 August 2004 and assumed the post of Director of the English Language and Literacy (ELL) Division on 1 December 2014, which includes the Main Literacy Programme (MLP) and has led curriculum enhancements for the DAS through the Essential Literacy Approach and the current integrated MLP curriculum.

Besides ELL, Geetha oversees the SpLD Assessment Service and Staff Professional Development division, where she led the development of professional pathways and quality assurance of all educational efforts. She also heads the DAS Research Committee and is an advisor in the Register of Educational therapists (Asia) (RETA). Formerly, the Assistant Director of the DAS Academy, Geetha trained Allied educators, parents and other professionals and continues to present at conferences, most recently at the 2019 Dyslexia Speld Foundation Conference in Perth.

Geetha has a Masters in English (NUS) and a Post Graduate Certificate in Learning and Teaching in Higher Education (Distinction) (LMU) and is currently pursuing her doctorate in the area of twice-exceptionality. With over 14 years of experience supporting children and adults in the area of dyslexia, Geetha aims to provide a quality service to dyslexics that searches for and realises their true potential and provides them with a view to appreciate their own unique abilities.



SUJATHA NAIR

*Assistant Director, Quality Assurance
DAS English Language and Literacy Division*

Sujatha joined the DAS in 2006 as an Educational Therapist and has over the years held the positions of Centre Manager and Resources Manager. Sujatha attained a Master of Education from The University of Adelaide in 2015 and a Bachelor of Business in Accountancy from Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT) in 2001. Her other qualifications include a Cambridge International Diploma for Teachers and Trainers (Dyslexia) and a Diploma in Management Studies (SUSS). Sujatha is also a member of the Register of Educational Therapist Asia (RETA).



SERENA TAN ABDULLAH

*Assistant Director, Curriculum Development & Implementation,
DAS English Language and Literacy Division*

Serena Abdullah is the Assistant Director with the English Language and Literacy (ELL) Division overseeing the development and the implementation of the curriculum at the DAS. She is also a Lead Educational Therapist who enjoys working and teaching children with learning difficulties. Her love and passion for teaching has led her to continuously seek new and innovative teaching methods to bring out the potential and self-confidence in her learners. She graduated with a Masters in Education (Curriculum and Teaching) from Nanyang Technological University/National Institute of Education (NTU/NIE) and has obtained a Cambridge International Diploma for Teachers and Trainers.

She hopes to continue enhancing the curriculum to ensure that learners from diverse backgrounds or those with varying learning needs benefit and learn effectively in class. Serena believes that every child progresses at their own pace but the process they take to reach the finishing line is what matters the most!



SOOFRINA MUBARAK

*EdTech Coordinator and Senior Educational Therapist
DAS English Language and Literacy Division*

Soofrina joined the DAS Association in 2012 and is now the EdTech Coordinator for the ELL Division and also a Senior Educational Therapist. Through working with dyslexic learners, Soofrina developed the interest to incorporate educational technologies in the lessons to make the learning and teaching both efficient and within reach for all. Guided by the mantra "As slow as we must but as fast as we can", Soofrina explored classroom differentiation using EdTech tools and now passionately shares knowledge for the professional development of teaching colleagues.

With a Bachelor's Degree in Economics and Finance, Soofrina pursued post-graduate studies in Special Educational Needs and is currently sponsored by DAS to complete her Master of Arts (Instructional Design and Technology) in National Institute of Education (NIE).



YOUR CHILD'S JOURNEY IN THE MAIN LITERACY PROGRAMME



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HELPING DYSLEXIC PEOPLE ACHIEVE

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