

# **Outstanding Teaching, Learning and Assessment (OTLA) Action Research Project**

**Words and pictures: creative approaches  
to cross-curricular literacy**

**Leeds College of Building (LCB) – June 2022**

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# Words and pictures: creative approaches to cross-curricular literacy

## Leeds College of Building (LCB)

### SUMMARY

This project set out to explore ways of encouraging reading for pleasure, with the ultimate aim of improving our students' reading skills, overall literacy and cultural capital. Recent research has suggested that reading for pleasure has massive potential for developing literacy skills and ultimately social mobility (Cremin, 2019; Shanahan, 2019; Wilhelm, 2017). We discovered that there was enthusiasm from staff and students for one-to-one support and creative approaches to reading promotion.

### RATIONALE

We know that amongst our Level 1 and 2 students there are often low levels of literacy and a range of barriers preventing engagement with reading and writing. We wanted to look at practical and creative ways of encouraging engagement, in concert with vocational departments. We also wanted to address the need for bespoke reading support for individuals, something which had been flagged for some time by Inclusive Learning Services within college, but at the start of the project was not being provided for. Finally, there was an awareness that the existing Learning Resource Centre was not necessarily meeting the needs of 'hard to reach' students, and therefore we wanted to explore the possibility of creating accessible 'reading spaces' in which to encourage and support engagement.

#### Other Contextual Information

Our action research was part of the Education and Training Foundation's OTLA 8 Programme. We worked with three vocational tutor groups, each with 12-15 students, including one Painting and Decorating, one Plastering and one Carpentry and Joinery. These three groups took part in our 'Drop Everything and Read' (DEAR) initiative once a week during tutorials. Our bespoke reading mentoring provision worked on two levels. For our highest needs students, we formed a partnership with Read Easy, a charitable organisation who provide phonics-led reading tuition for adults with very limited reading skills. We also recruited and trained a team of 6 college staff to work as reading mentors for 'moderate needs' students – i.e. students who can read but would benefit from additional support. Finally, we created spaces, activities, and opportunities to promote and encourage reading within college, many of which were piloted on World Book Day, and then written into extra-curricular provision, with the support of LCB Student Union.

# APPROACH

## 1. Engagement with tutor groups

Since the project lead joined LCB in 2019, the question of how to integrate literacy into vocational areas has been a constant topic of discussion. Both staff and students have lived through a decade of subject-specific vocabulary walls and other initiatives; we were keen to use the OTLA 8 opportunity to explore more creative approaches. Three groups were ultimately worked with, each given a Book Box and a weekly 'Drop Everything and Read' PowerPoint (Appendix 3.1), intended to structure discussion and provoke thought. Two of the groups went on to work with Leeds Arts University (LAU), taking part in three hour-long workshops in which they worked with undergraduates to design and create models of superheroes. One group responded really positively to this and will be taking part in a further 3 workshops in May/June 2022 and also plan to attend the LAU end of year Degree Show with their tutor. This tutor was invited to meet with the Vice Principal in February 2022 to discuss his group's engagement with OTLA 8 and how their attitude to reading has changed as a result of their participation (Appendix 3.2 – staff feedback).

## 2. Reading Mentors

We know that a lack of basic literacy skills is a huge barrier for many of our students, who are sometimes unable to access vocational learning and/or make progress within their vocational areas as a result. I have previously developed 'vocational literacy' materials to aid accessibility but found that without intensive one-to-one support even this intervention was ineffective. OTLA 8 enabled us to explore an alternative route, in which reading for pleasure was the means by which we attempted to improve reading and literacy skills. For our high needs students, we developed a partnership with national charity Read Easy (Appendix 3.3). We identified 6 students who required 'back to basics', phonics-led mentoring. Read Easy assessed these students, 4 of whom have been receiving mentoring sessions twice weekly since January. For our moderate needs students, we recruited and trained a team of 6 Reading Mentors from LCB staff to deliver weekly reading sessions (Appendix 3.5). Yorkshire Mentoring trained these volunteers on the basic principles and concepts of mentoring, whilst the project lead designed and delivered training on the process of planning and delivering the reading sessions. Yorkshire Mentoring's involvement was funded by LCB, and they will offer on-going supervision and evaluation until the end of the academic year (Appendix 3.7). We have been clear with our mentors that they too are 'action researchers': we set out on this from a position of not really knowing what approaches would be most effective with our cohort, so their observations and feedback will be invaluable moving forward (see Appendix 3.3).

## 3. Creating Reading Spaces

In some respects this has been the most difficult aspect of our research. The current LRC at the North Street campus of LCB is commonly regarded as not being particularly appealing for some of our hard-to-reach students. We wanted to look at ways of taking reading out into different parts of the college, creating comfortable, accessible, and creative areas for reading. It emerged in December that the LRC was likely to be completely re-designed in the new academic year, and thus would hopefully become more appealing and accessible, so we focused on 'pop up' activities and facilities which we hoped would have an impact in the interim. For example, our Carpentry and Joinery students built three 'Little Libraries', which were then decorated by our Painting and Decorating students. These have been placed around college as a facility for picking up a free book and/or dropping off books that others can take away. This facility is for staff and students and has stimulated a great deal of interest and discussion about reading. For World Book Day, both the

college's LRCs created Marvel superhero-themed displays and seating areas and tutors were encouraged to bring their students along to access these. We also ran a college-wide 'Heroes and Villains' poster activity for WBD, culminating in a massive display of students and staff contributions. Pop-up workshops were also offered that week – one creative sign painting (in North Street Reception – students designed and painted signs for the Little Libraries) and two 'Dungeons and Dragons' lunchtime drop-ins. The various workshops were very popular and had so much interest and support from staff that the LCB Student Union has agreed to fund these as an ongoing activity, diversifying their extra-curricular offer and promoting literacy along the way. This is a powerful unexpected outcome (see Appendix 3.5 for photographs of all above activities).

## OUTCOMES AND IMPACT

### Teaching, Learning and Assessment

This is a slightly difficult area to evaluate as so little of our activity has been classroom-based. In our DEAR sessions tutors have taken 20 minutes a week to encourage reading and, using the weekly PowerPoint, to steer discussion about reading-related topics (such as the benefits of reading, characterisation, narrative, settings). I met with the tutors at the beginning of the project to discuss our approach. It was interesting that they initially lacked confidence in delivering the sessions. I stressed the informal nature of the activities: how our aim was to link reading to areas of life and culture that our students were already interested in (such as film and TV, Marvel, graffiti art, local history, football, etc). Questionnaires were given to students at the start, middle, and end of the year, and feedback sought from tutors too. In cases where the tutors really got on board with the project, this became a dynamic, two-way process, where tutors made suggestions about activities and resources (see Appendix 3.6 for tutor and student feedback).

### Organisational Development

This project has promoted the value of literacy across the college with different sections now engaged, for example:

- Vocational teachers (painting and decorating, carpentry and joinery, plastering) who initially lacked confidence are now actively promoting reading with their learners in vocational sessions.
- We now have a mentoring training course that can be used again, and both teaching and non-teaching staff from all levels in the college are trained and experienced Reading Mentors. We plan to recruit again in the new academic year.
- Forging a lasting relationship with Read Easy means that some of our most disadvantaged learners will be able to learn to read using a phonics-led approach. This will continue into the new academic year. Through our link with Leeds Arts University, our students are encouraged to be creative and aspirational, building their personal confidence and expanding their worldview.
- Learning Resource Centre staff aim to continue promoting World Book Day activities annually, as well as book exchanges and other book-related activities.
- The Student Union is now keen to offer games/story-based enrichment activities in addition to sports-based activities, with lunchtime sessions planned for the new academic year.

- Staff and students are talking about reading and swapping and reading books in the 'Little Libraries'. A lunchtime Book Club has been set up for staff, the first session of which ran in May. This has been put into place by the English HOD and is being coordinated by an English tutor with the support of key staff from Human Resources.

## Professional Development

Professional Standard	How our project outcomes demonstrate this standard
<p><b>4. Be creative and innovative in selecting and adapting strategies to help learners to learn</b></p>	<p>Having had responsibility for whole school literacy whilst teaching in secondary, one of the comparative strengths of the OTLA 8 project was the creative freedom it offered. I (project lead) was very aware that our students have all graduated through intensive primary and secondary literacy strategies, so what we needed to offer at college had to look and feel very different to what they experienced at school. Our learners often have lower levels of literacy, but by their very nature are practical, tactile and creative. Through mediums such as visual arts, comic books, practical construction and design and role-playing games that key into their cultural sphere of reference, we were able to initiate conversations about reading which otherwise may have seemed irrelevant or off-putting.</p>
<p><b>5. Value and promote social and cultural diversity, equality of opportunity and inclusion</b></p>	<p>This project was as much about cultural capital and inclusion as it was about the promotion of reading – these spheres are so interlinked and inter-dependent it's virtually impossible to discuss them in isolation. In a college community which is predominantly white, working class and male, it was important to us to open up the frame of reference and make unexpected partnerships. The work we are doing with Leeds Arts University is a good example of this, enabling our students to work alongside undergraduates and gain an insight into different lifestyles and world views. Our WBD activities enabled students to take part in role-playing games and arts activities. These will be taken forward now by the Student Union as an addition to their traditionally sports-heavy extra-curricular offer. We are also in discussion about offering activities linked to gaming and review writing – again embedding literacy within the fabric of the college in a way which also challenges stereotypes of 'what our students are interested in'. Needless to say, the two tiers of mentoring are, by design, intended to promote equality of opportunity, progression and social mobility.</p>
<p><b>20. Contribute to organisational development and quality improvement through collaboration with others.</b></p>	<p>One of the key successes of the OTLA8 project has been the enthusiasm with which staff across the college have got onboard with various strands of the initiative. The more links made with vocational staff, the wider the project reached. For example, the non-English/ILS staff who we trained as Reading Mentors were instrumental in getting staff involved with WBD and putting me in touch with tutors to help with the construction of the Little Libraries – I didn't have the right contacts in these departments, but they did. Many, many staff have contributed books to the general book</p>

collection appeal and also to Christmas Book Appeal. The Little Libraries are being 'looked after' by staff, who regularly drop off donations and also tidy up the shelves.

## LEARNING FROM THIS PROJECT

### From the project leader:

- Taking an unexpected and non-traditional approach to the promotion of reading and literacy can feel risky, but once key staff are on board this gathers momentum and can have unexpectedly positive outcomes for all.
- The three tutorial groups all responded very differently to the DEAR stimulus and the LAU sessions. The most obviously 'successful' engagement was from the group tutored by a member of staff who was genuinely enthusiastic about 'having a go' and taking a chance on something new.
- Tutors and their groups must be consulted with regard to activities, reading materials and other stimuli. None of the tutors used everything provided, and some requested resources that I'd never have thought of developing/buying in. A flexible arrangement is essential, to match the tutor's comfort and confidence levels, their students' requirements, and to accommodate time constraints in tutorials.
- Some tutors need little in the way of support, whilst others need regular support and guidance (this was a real difficulty as with a rigid teaching commitment I wasn't physically able to offer the support some of the tutors needed; it was difficult to arrange TAs to support tutors as an alternative. This also hindered my ability to gain a regular, hands-on insight as to how sessions were progressing – I often had to rely on tutor and student feedback rather than first-hand observation).
- We don't do our students any favours by assuming that we already know what they're interested in! Something that has come out of this research is that many students who we consider to 'struggle' with literacy do still actually enjoy reading, creative activities and even role-playing games, all of which potentially have great benefits for their literacy, learning and mental health.
- Reading Mentoring works – the feedback from both students and staff shows that the progress the mentored students have made has been considerable, and for many has positively affected not just their literacy but their general confidence and well-being.
- Engaging staff from a wide range of disciplines and roles has enormous benefits – one of our Mentors is an administrator in Construction Crafts. Through her we had enormous 'buy in' from that team, donating books, sharing resources, referring students for mentoring. Another mentor is a manager in Transport and Planning. Because of her involvement and enthusiasm, I was able to make links with Carpentry and Joinery whose students made our Little Libraries. This 'ripple effect' is essential when addressing cross-institutional cultural change.
- Being flexible and non-prescriptive has been essential. Recognising that staff present with differing levels of confidence, ability and experience is crucial. Offering options and flexibility with regard to engagement will reap greater rewards than a 'one size fits all' approach.



- Both Reading Mentors and DEAR tutors all seem to agree on one thing: they needed more time and more resources to develop an engagement which they could see had enormous potential for so many. From my own perspective, I really wanted to offer more support to all staff involved. It was frustrating not to have the time or flexibility to develop and support these relationships further – the potential for impact here is huge, but more time and funding is essential.

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# APPENDICES

## Appendix 1: The Project Team

Project Role	Name	Job Role	Contact
Project Lead	Lisa Matheson	English Lecturer	<a href="mailto:lmatheson@lcb.ac.uk">lmatheson@lcb.ac.uk</a>
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Project Team	Martin Parr	Vocational Tutor	<a href="mailto:mparr@lcb.ac.uk">mparr@lcb.ac.uk</a>
Project Team	Steven Brocklehurst	Vocational Tutor	<a href="mailto:sbrocklehurst@lcb.ac.uk">sbrocklehurst@lcb.ac.uk</a>
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Project Team	Sarah Carter	Vocational Project Manager	<a href="mailto:scarter@lcb.ac.uk">scarter@lcb.ac.uk</a>
Project Team	Anjulee Bharath	ESOL teacher	<a href="mailto:abharath@lcb.ac.uk">abharath@lcb.ac.uk</a>
Project Team	Bradley Hurst	Learning Support Assistant	<a href="mailto:bhurst@lcb.ac.uk">bhurst@lcb.ac.uk</a>
Project Team	Michael Norton	Library Manager	<a href="mailto:mnorton@lcb.ac.uk">mnorton@lcb.ac.uk</a>
Project Team	John Stevenson	Painting and Decorating Tutor	<a href="mailto:jstevenson@lcb.ac.uk">jstevenson@lcb.ac.uk</a>
Project Team	Garry Johnson Crabtree	Painting and Decorating Tutor	<a href="mailto:GJohnson-Crabtree@lcb.ac.uk">GJohnson-Crabtree@lcb.ac.uk</a>
Project Team	Roy Turpin	Carpentry and Joinery Tutor	<a href="mailto:rturpin@lcb.ac.uk">rturpin@lcb.ac.uk</a>
Project Team	Jo Kemp	Read Easy Coordinator	<a href="mailto:leedscoordinator@readeasy.org.uk">leedscoordinator@readeasy.org.uk</a>
Mentor	Catriona Mowat	Educational trainer and consultant	<a href="mailto:catrionamowat@icloud.com">catrionamowat@icloud.com</a>
Research Group Lead	Claire Callow	Educational trainer and consultant	<a href="mailto:clairelcallow@gmail.com">clairelcallow@gmail.com</a>

## Appendix 2: Learner Case Studies

### Student A

'Joe' (not his real name) is a 22 year old Carpentry and Joinery student who in many ways was a key catalyst for this project. He has attended LCB for two years now presenting with extremely low levels of literacy. He has severe dyslexia, social and emotional difficulties and mental health issues.

He came to LCB with little in the way of qualifications but last year was able to achieve a Grade 1 in GCSE English language. This was a huge struggle for Joe who experienced extreme frustration and anger at not being able to access the curriculum. The head of Student Experience asked me in 2020 if there was a Reading Mentor scheme we could use with him, there was nothing 'off the shelf' I could find at that point, other than schemes such as Accelerated Reader which really aren't appropriate for our age group.

This is what triggered my thinking about reading and literacy promotion in FE – there is so much on offer in secondary and then it seems to disappear into the ether in post-16 settings.

When the OTLA funding bid came through I was able to offer some brief training to one of our LSAs so that reading mentoring could begin with Joe immediately. This LSA went on to enrol on our formal Reading Mentoring scheme and she also mentors a second student now.

Joe had such low levels of literacy that I matched him up with one of our Read Easy volunteers, although he continued to receive 'moderate needs' mentoring as well from our LSA. This relationship has been extremely positive for Joe, not only has his literacy improved, but also his mood and ability to self-regulate and seek help.

#### **His Reading Mentor says:**

"Over the past few months, I have seen Joe's confidence grow considerably and his fluency has improved greatly. The reading sessions are shown to be a great benefit to him. A glossary book has been helpful for Joe to jot down any words he finds difficult, I am able to write the phonetic spellings next to those words for him to refer to which he finds especially useful. He can use the effective technique of spelling out the letters then joining them up to create the full word. I am really impressed with Joe's pronunciation of words; he has come a long way from the beginning of our sessions. He displays a better understanding and comprehension of the context of the reading material now than from when we first started. Providing positive feedback on his reading skills has been helpful and encouraging for him. I questioned Joe on how he found our reading sessions, he has said, "They are going good, I've been enjoying it. It has helped me improve on some words and some words not but that's all part of it. It encouraged me to get a book, I wouldn't usually do that. I even encourage my friends to do it as it helps me and I tell them 'nice one' when they go to their reading mentor". Joe has said that the reading sessions have helped him better understand filling in job applications when he is applying. Continuing reflection on Joe's progression and work has helped build his confidence and understand his capability. Joe purchased a book, 'Peaky Blinders', after our evaluation and is trying to target himself to read a bit each week. Joe says he likes challenges and always chooses the harder activities in our sessions. We discuss the meanings of unfamiliar words and how he can add them into his writing. For next term, I plan to create sessions that can help Joe with SPAG which could help him with his writing. In theory classes, I have continued to support him as a reader and write his answers on a separate piece of paper for him to independently transfer the answers into his class booklet".

Importantly, Joe's Reading Mentor has consistently linked her observations to Joe's EHCP outcomes – learning to read has made a huge difference for this student.

I should also mention that his Read Easy mentor is extremely pleased with how Joe is doing. She has developed a really positive relationship with him and says he attends his sessions regularly and with a positive and enthusiastic attitude.

## **Student B**

'Yusef' is a 20-year-old Carpentry and Joinery student who came to the UK from Eritrea three years ago. He is also studying GCSE English. Bright and extremely motivated, Yusef's greatest barrier is his English – his vocational tutor says he has: "issues around his English skills and whether or not he would be able to understand and pass the online exams for next year".

This is a common difficulty for many of our students - their lower levels of literacy can hold them back from progressing vocationally. I happened to be Yusef's GCSE English teacher so had a good insight into the disparity between his natural intellect and his ability to express this in his writing. Something really striking about Yusef was his absolute determination to make progress with his English – both in lessons and outside of college.

Following our in-house training Yusef was paired up with one of our Reading Mentors who says:

"The reading mentoring scheme has been very positive in terms of learning how to support a student with learning difficulties and make a real difference in their lives by integrating reading as an exercise to improve their wellbeing. I got to learn about my mentee's relationship with the English language and how it was a barrier to some parts of day-to-day life. It has been a new experience working with an ESOL student. I have been able to learn about how they have struggled in life, their culture but also how they used that struggle as a motivation to grow as a human being. Yusef's desire to learn and his positive energy motivated me to improve my knowledge about reading and learn new ways of supporting young people. I think overall the reading mentoring programme has been wonderful and you can see from the first session to now where the student struggles and how we can support them, where it works best for them and build a positive relationship with the mentee".

Yusef was also involved with the DEAR sessions and took part in the World Book Day 'Dungeons and Dragons' workshop. He has now successfully completed the written component of his vocational course and will have his first GCSE English exam next week – I hope that his involvement in the project will have a positive impact on his performance. I noticed in lessons an increased ability to understand informal language and idiom. Yusef also gained confidence engaging with the range of texts used in the GCSE paper, possibly as a result of the variety of texts he was exposed to through mentoring. His mentor says that Yusef's reading speed and independent reading has improved greatly and that he is now more confident in asking questions about vocabulary and word meaning. He also observed the "social benefit" attached to the mentoring, how it has helped Yusef become more confident generally. The mentor commented "this has been a two-way process, I've learned so much from mentoring Yusef; it's a human relationship, not just reading".

### **Appendix 3: Project Resources and Reflections**

Please find below the following appendices:



- Appendix 3.1: Sample DEAR PowerPoint.
- Appendix 3.2: Feedback from staff who had direct involvement.
- Appendix 3.3: Read Easy.
- Appendix 3.4: Promotional Material for Reading Mentors scheme and Christmas Book Appeal. Text from LCB Newsletter March 2022.
- Appendix 3.5: Photographs from World Book Day, Leeds Arts University Sessions, Little Libraries.
- Appendix 3.6: DEAR Feedback from tutors and students, May 2022
- Appendix 3.7: Progress Report from Yorkshire Mentoring

## Appendix 3.1 Sample DEAR PowerPoint

Below is one example of our DEAR PowerPoints. Nearly 30 of these were developed over the course of our action research project.

**DROP EVERYTHING AND READ....**

ABOUT ZOMBIES!

Did you know ....

1. "Zombie" has been derived from the African word 'nzambi' which means 'God'.
2. Zombies represent all that is dark and base about the human condition. The fear of zombies often stems from real human fears regarding unfamiliar or chaotic forces in the world.
3. Around the globe, October 8 is celebrated as 'World Zombie Day'.
4. The exact way to kill Zombies is to break their head or damage their brain.
5. There are many diseases that exhibit symptoms similar to the Zombies.
6. [Australia](#) is the safest place if there was a Zombie apocalypse.
7. There is a law in Haiti that stated that is a crime to turn someone into a Zombie.

**First watch these**

Zombieland Official Trailer #1 - YouTube


28 Days Later (2002) Official Trailer - YouTube

The Walking Dead Season 11 - Official Trailer (2021) Norman Reedus, Lauren Cohan - YouTube

**Now DROP EVERYTHING AND READ...**

**Rick Grimes 2000 Chapter 2 (the first story in your comic)**

*The fall of civilisation has all been a diabolical plot by aliens, who have come to steal Earth's water. They've begun turning the dead into super soldiers, and Rick Grimes has risen to fight against those who have joined their new alien overlords, like the resurrected Governor. But Rick wasn't expecting to fight against his lost love, Lori....*



**Why are we so interested in zombies?**

**HOW TO KILL A ZOMBIE**

Imagine you're in a zombie apocalypse...

How would you survive?  
What would your plan be?  
How would you protect yourself and your family?  
Could you 'dispatch' a loved one?  
Would you make it?




Figure 1. DEAR PowerPoint.

## **Appendix 3.2: Feedback from staff who had direct involvement**

### **Staff Feedback:**

#### **Learning Support Organiser**

I think it has been valuable for the students involved in all aspects of the work you have done. I think there has been a perception in being ok to admit you find it hard. I think staff not usually involved directly with students have benefitted in terms of spending time with the students and gaining an appreciation for some of those difficulties.

For the high needs readers, I think we have seen a real difference in 'Joe' which I am sure is due to the access to this and other time with his mentor.

The WBD stuff was great, and it was good to see so many students (and staff) engaging with it. I guess my only negative on this was the lack of female heroes and villains (I guess it shows us how most of the interesting characters in books and movies are predominantly male - but coming so close to International Women's Day I think it was more obvious).

#### **Tutor who delivered DEAR**

To be honest When you first approached me about my full-time group doing the Drop Everything & Read project. I thought you had got mixed up some other group!

Then when I spoke with the group about the project, quite a few had a really good moan! But once we got started, most of them became more engaged in the reading.

When the Leeds Arts University creative partnership started, they began to be more engaged, especially with the students who liked rats!

This has been really good for the students to try something different, like the model making, when they thought they wouldn't be able to do it but gave it ago and enjoyed it.

I have been quite impressed with the group with how they responded.

#### **Reading Mentor**

The highs - after only a few sessions I can see him becoming more comfortable with me and he is able to be more vulnerable in front of me - I feel we are already making progress!

The lows – Once-a-week sessions aren't enough - we need to give these learners more time and resource. They are keen to progress but need intensive reading support. It has been eye-opening to see the low levels of literacy among some of our students and an issue the college shouldn't ignore.

Other comments - I've really enjoyed being a mentor, 'Harry' has enjoyed the sessions too.

#### **Leeds Arts University Creative Partnership**

**Moderate needs reading mentoring (in-house)** - I strongly believe the reading sessions have been a great success for the students partaking. I have been a reading mentor for X for the past few months and Y as of recently: it has shown to be a great benefit for them both. Over the past few months, I have seen X's confidence grow considerably and his fluency has improved greatly. We have looked at various different reading materials presenting different layouts and context: graphic novels, books, extracts, newspapers. This has been brilliant in enhancing their vocabulary and terminology as well as understanding different topic subjects that they may not have been exposed to before. An interest in graphic novels and comics has been very striking and engaging for the students. The foregrounding techniques have been a noteworthy way to familiarise the context upcoming in the reading and create a relaxed yet engaging atmosphere. A glossary book has been helpful for X to jot down any words he finds difficult, I am able to write the phonetic spellings next to it for him to refer back to which he finds very useful. He is able to use the effective technique of spelling out the letters then joining them up to create the full word. I'm really impressed with X's pronunciation of words; he has come a long way from the beginning of our sessions. He displays a better understanding and comprehension of the context of the reading material now than from when we first started. Providing positive feedback on his reading skills has been helpful and encouraging for him. I questioned X on how he's found our reading sessions, he has said, *"They're going good, I've been enjoying it. It has helped me improve on some words and some words not but that's all part of it. It encouraged me to get a book, I wouldn't usually do that. I even encourage my friends to do it as it helps me and I tell them 'Nice one' when they go to their reading mentor"*.

**World Book Day activities** - I believe this was a good opportunity to expose students to other practical and creative sectors. It allowed students to get hands-on and have a feel of developing something they may not have had the opportunity to create before which was interesting for most of them.

### **Reading Mentor and LSA who supported LAU sessions**

This was a great event that has created awareness for many students and hopefully will encourage many students to become book owners, maybe even for the first time. I feel the little libraries are really encouraging for students to be surrounded by a bit more of a culture that promotes reading and not be afraid to take a book.

### **Tutor who delivered DEAR**

The reading project was very well planned and the power points had good information in them that got most of the group talking and involved. Some members of the group didn't participate in this which was unfortunate to see as the rest of the group gained so much from it. Making the models was a fun exercise as they transformed their drawings into models. The only thing that didn't work for me as a tutor was the timing of them, 10 -15 mins didn't seem long enough once the group started talking about the books that they had been reading. It was good to see them reading and I hope they, even if it's just one, carries it on.

Also, when I was off with illness, the group missed a few sessions which was difficult to get back as some had lost interest. I think this could be a really useful and beneficial tool for the college to roll out and actually have it timetabled into sessions as it's a good introduction to reading for fun. Some



haven't ever experienced that.

## Reading Mentors – staff evaluation May 2022 (sample feedback from 1 mentor)

### 1. What have you most enjoyed about being a Reading Mentor:

- Seeing the progression of the reading mentee each week. It's very rewarding for both parties to acknowledge the improvements.
- Participating in the foregrounding activities and techniques with the students has helped create a relaxed environment and build up rapport.

### 2. In what way has your student made progress with their reading: -

- Their confidence has grown considerably.
- Fluency has improved greatly.
- Learning new words each week to add into their vocabulary and writing.
- Learning new techniques to help support them pronouncing words.
- Displaying a better understanding and comprehension of the context of the reading material.
- It has encouraged them to buy their own books online in topics they are interested in and read them in their spare time.
- Evaluation and reflections have made it useful to track progress and acknowledge improvements and achievements.

### 3. How can we improve our reading offer to students – any ideas for next year's mentors, or for reading across the college:

- Include books from Netflix shows.

### 4. What advice would you give to a member of staff thinking of becoming a Reading Mentor?

- Engage in activities and topics that the student is interested in to continue an interest in reading and to encourage reading in their spare time.

## Appendix 3.3: Read Easy



Figure 2. The Read Easy programme.

Read Easy  
helping adults learn to read

## Contact

Read Easy Leeds

To find out more, contact:  
Read Easy Tim Leadbeater (Team Leader)  
(info to follow )

To refer a Reader:  
Read Easy Coordinator  
(Joanne Kemp)  
[joanne.kemp@readeasy.org.uk](mailto:joanne.kemp@readeasy.org.uk)  
07902998166

National  
[readeasy.org.uk](http://readeasy.org.uk)

Further details are on the Read Easy publicity circulated today

## Appendix 3.4: Promotional Material for Reading Mentors scheme and Christmas Book Appeal. Text from LCB Newsletter March 2022

**Help our students build their reading skills**

Are you a staff member interested in becoming a Reading Mentor? If so, come along to our information event on Wednesday 24 November, 2-4pm in Meeting Room 1, North Street.

Mentoring will give you the chance to make a difference to our students' lives. If you feel it is for you, there will be a training day in December 2021.

You will learn to plan, motivate and inspire with sessions that will not only build our students' reading skills but also their confidence.

Your mentee will be a Level 1 or 2 student and starting from January you will meet with them for 20 minutes a week. Materials and resources are provided and you will receive support throughout.

Find out more on Wednesday 24 November. Make a difference. Make it here.

Leeds college of Building

**Christmas Book Appeal**

Reading for pleasure is seen important for children's cognitive development than their parents' level of education and it is more powerful factor in life achievement than socio-economic background. 16-year-olds who choose to read books for pleasure outside of school are more likely to secure managerial or professional jobs in later life (The Reading Agency 2017)

Please help to spread the love of reading amongst our students this December, donating a book to our Christmas Book Appeal.

From 20th November until 20th December we will be offering book swaps as a gift to students in the final week of term.

Donations of new and good quality used books in any genre, including graphic novels, available books, comics, non-fiction books, comics, puzzle books, word books anything you think may be of interest to LCB students.

What to do:

1. Wrap your book in Christmas paper.
2. Label your book with a little bit of information about the book or yourself in the form of a card with your name on it.
3. Add a Christmas wish if you like.
4. Drop off your book to the swap in the final week of term.

We look forward to seeing you with your book.

Don't be the only one who reads and we're not alone!

Figure 3. Promotional Material for Reading Mentors scheme. Figure 4. The Christmas Book Appeal.

### Article published in the LCB newsletter March 2022 (another will be published following the LAU activities in May/June 2022):

#### Help Students Build their Reading Skills

*The college has been involved in a range of exciting initiatives to help students improve their reading skills. Discover what activities have been taking place and how you can get involved.*

It has been identified that certain students, especially in Levels 1 and 2, need extra support in developing their literacy skills. The college has received funding from the OTLA 8 programme with the aim of encouraging students to read for pleasure.

Three Little Libraries have been set up around college for staff and students to take a free book, comic or magazine. They have been brilliantly constructed by Carpentry and Joinery students and customised by volunteers from Painting and Decorating. We ask if you could donate any easy-to-read books, graphic novels, comics, magazines and word/board games for others to take away and enjoy.

In addition, students who require extra support in reading have been receiving weekly mentoring sessions with both our in-house Reading Mentors and through the charity [Read Easy](#). Vocational tutors have been piloting 'Drop Everything and Read' activities with their tutor groups, in an effort to embed literacy within the vocational curriculum in ways that are creative and informal. Initial feedback suggests



that these activities are having a really positive effect on our students' literacy'. Keep a look out for opportunities to become a Reading mentor in the new academic year. As well if you have any interesting hobbies and would like to host a workshop for students please get in touch.

Your support in helping students discover the fun in reading is invaluable. For any enquiries, please contact [mbailey@lcb.ac.uk](mailto:mbailey@lcb.ac.uk).

### Appendix 3.5: Photographs from World Book Day, Leeds Arts University Sessions, Little Libraries



Figure 5. Model making.



Figure 6. Learners engage in interactive activities as part of World Book Day.



Figure 7. Some of the resources developed over the course of our action research project.

### Appendix 3.6: DEAR Feedback from tutors and students, May 2022

#### Tutors:

- Surprised that attitudes changed so much, from initial reluctance to really positive engagement.
- Has adapted to fit group – will use Book Box throughout session, for example when some students have finished written work and others still working.
- LAU sessions were fun and popular, just a shame that because of Covid the first three were online – looking forward to face-to-face sessions later this month.
- Surprised that most students took so well to silent reading, noticed that pictorial books always most popular.
- Didn't always have time to use the PowerPoints – was easy for these to 'eat up' time, which was limited in session due to having so many other things to cover.
- Book Box has been most effective.
- WOW works well – tutor designs his own, linked to British Values.
- Wordsearches and puzzles have also been really popular

#### Students:

- Liked Book Box, liked pictorial books, comics.
- Really enjoyed silent reading – “chill time” in a “busy world”.

- Max now reads more at home – sports, football and autobiography.
- Joe likes to read on his phone – articles, blogs, etc.
- Both enjoyed LAU sessions “I enjoyed that”, “it was good”. Both commented on how “nice” the undergraduates were, how it could have been “awkward” but because they were “friendly” it was easy to get involved. Both enjoyed “learning about the students, their ideas and experiences”.
- Overall, the two students gave the reading project 7/8 starts out of 10! They said, “it gets your brain going”, “makes you feel focused”, is “healthy” and “relaxing”

## **Appendix 3.7: Progress Report from Yorkshire Mentoring**

### **Leeds College of Building**

#### **Reading mentors: A mentoring programme to support students to become confident and able readers**

##### **Progress report March 2022**

##### **Overview**

This pilot programme has been developed in partnership with Leeds College of Building as the commissioning organisation and Yorkshire Mentoring as the delivery partner. The programme aims to support up to 10 participants who have been identified by Leeds College of Building as needing support in reading to enable them to progress their studies and employability. Each participant will have access to a briefing session and a weekly mentoring session of one hour. The mentors will be recruited from amongst students and staff and will need to complete the mentor training. Yorkshire Mentoring will deliver the briefing programme, the mentor training and if required supervision, reviews, reporting and liaison with Leeds College of Building.

It was agreed that Yorkshire Mentoring would provide supervision and review meetings and submit a bi-monthly progress report.

##### **Training programme**

The project was promoted initially to staff and briefing sessions were held in November to inform mentors about the purpose of mentoring and how the programme will work so that they can then make a decision whether to participate or not.

A mentor training event was held in December for 6 mentors to ensure that they had the skills, knowledge and qualities required. This covered mentoring defined, key skills including questioning and listening, preparation and delivery of mentoring and the opportunity for practice and feedback. Leeds College of Building provided information about the literacy context and provided examples of resources which could be used.

##### **The mentors**

The staff that came forward as mentors were all existing support staff, 5 from learning/ESOL and 1 from administration. All had been trained in safeguarding and 5 had experience of dealing with



students with particular support needs.

Supervision and review meeting were arranged on a one-to-one basis with each mentor in March.

### **The mentees**

Students were referred to the programme by tutors, 5 from English and 1 from construction. 3 students don't have English as a first language and 3 do. Mentors provided each mentee with an overview of the programme and a baseline assessment to complete.

### **Feedback from review meetings**

All mentors felt prepared for their first mentoring meetings in terms of the training received. They did suggest it would have been useful to have some information about their mentee in terms of their background and any particular needs. One mentor had spoken to the student's tutor and carried out some basic research on the student.

The students who don't have English as a first language appear to engage more positively with the programme and don't express any reservations about being identified as needing additional support. One student has basic literacy needs at a primary level, one has advanced needs in terms of vocabulary and more creative writing, one student has not engaged with the programme and has very low attendance levels in college.

The mentors all used the context of the student's interests as a starting point and were able to access reading materials and in some cases activities. It was suggested that the resources currently available need to be extended in terms of both content and level. There is also a need to develop more literacy based activities that are related to contemporary themes and curriculum areas.

### **Recommendations to date**

- Basic information to be shared with mentors about mentees before first meeting.
- Tutors to be more engaged to support with specific learning resources and develop differentiated activities.
- Resources to be reviewed and extended to support reading for pleasure in order to engage students and extend their reading outside the classroom.

### **Timeline completed**

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Lead</b>
Mentor briefing sessions	November	Jane Walton
Mentor training	December	Jane Walton
Supervision meetings	March/May/July	Jane Walton
Review meetings	March/May/July	Jane Walton
Reporting	March/May/July	Jane Walton

### **Timeline to be completed**

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Lead</b>
Supervision meetings	May/July	Jane Walton
Review meetings	May/July	Jane Walton
Reporting	May/July	Jane Walton

## Appendix 4: Participants and Stakeholders

No of learners?	<b>100</b>	No of staff?	<b>30</b>
No of organisations?	<b>4</b>	No of employers/ stakeholders?	<b>1</b>

## Appendix 5: Research/ Evaluation Approach

<b>Participant/observer</b> (e.g. practitioner reflective accounts, logs)	<b>X</b>	<b>Interview/survey</b> (e.g. polls, questionnaires, learner interviews)	<b>X</b>
<b>Observation of practice</b> (in person, video, observation notes)	<b>X</b>	<b>Document analysis</b> (e.g. learner work, session plans, annotated resources, policies)	
<b>Custom test/assessment</b> (of knowledge, skill, attitude, participation) for your 'intervention'		<b>High-stakes learner assessment</b> (e.g. A Level results, End Point Assessment, BTECs)	
<b>Before/after assessment</b> (e.g. measures of progress or change in attainment, participation)	<b>X</b>	<b>Comparative trial</b> (e.g. comparing participants' outcomes against a 'control' group)	<b>X</b>
<b>Other</b> (specify):	Action Research.		



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