

Elklan Training Course

Speech and Language Support in the Classroom / for 5 – 11s

Background

The Elklan Training Course *Speech and Language Support in the Classroom / for 5 – 11s* has been run three times at St. George's International School. (It was named 'in the Classroom' for the first 2 courses, and then Elklan changed the name to 'for 5 – 11s'). Karen Lang, Speech & Language Therapist, attended a two day 'train the trainer' workshop in London in November 2010 which enables her to run the training package, mark portfolios and submit candidates for the accreditation process.

The course provides information and strategies to develop the communication skills of all children aged 5 – 11 years and in particular those with speech, language and communication needs (www.elklan.co.uk). The strategies are also very relevant to students with English as an additional language. Although the focus is on primary aged children, many of the ideas are also relevant to children in Early Years and Reception.

The course begins with an initial introduction to 'What is communication?' and how to identify students' communication strengths and areas of difficulty. The programme then teaches strategies to help children with:

- Listening and attention
- Visual strategies.
- Memory skills
- Mind mapping.
- Developing comprehension through information carrying words and linguistic concepts.
- Understanding beyond simple sentences; developing verbal reasoning and inferencing.
- Promoting vocabulary development.
- Expressive language and grammar.
- Narrative skills.
- Social communication skills.
- Unclear speech
- Links between speech and literacy
- Stammering

The course is run over 10 sessions each of 2 hours. Participants can choose to hand in a portfolio of their work which is then assessed to qualify for either a level 2 or level 3 award with the Open College Network London. All homework is highly practical, requiring the participants to implement the strategies that they have learned with the students that they are working with.

Questionnaire

The aim of this questionnaire was to determine the long term effectiveness of this training course. Questionnaires were not sent to all of the original participants, as some had left the school or were on maternity leave, and so contact details were no longer available.

Course	Number of Participants	Questionnaires Sent	Questionnaires Received	% return
March – June 2011	20 – all from St. George's	13	5	38%
January – March 2012	13 in total 9 from St. George's 4 from European School	7	1	14%
January – April 2014	16 in total 12 from St. George's 2 from ISL 2 from 'Over the Rainbow'	13	5	38%
Total	49 participants	33 questionnaires sent. (i.e. 67% of original participants)	11	33%

There may be a bias in the return of the questionnaires, as perhaps those who remembered more about the course were more likely to fill in the questionnaire.

1.	In which year did you attend the <i>Speech & Language Support</i> training course?	See table above	
2.	Are you still applying the strategies you learned on the course to your work in the classroom?	Yes	No
		9	2
		82%	18%
If yes, what strategies are you still using?			
The areas identified by at least 2 participants are highlighted in blue.			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listening and attention (x 3); non-verbal communication and good listening poster (x 1) • Understanding spoken language with multi-sensory approach (x 3) and visual schedules • Story strategies (x 3); Blank language scheme after each story (x 1), sequencing and retelling stories (x 1), story maps (x 1) • Mind maps (x 3) • Information carrying words (x2), especially with children with EAL (x1) • Vocabulary building strategies (x 2) 			

	<p>Other areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awareness of the complexity of the language. • Maintain natural eye contact with the student. • Auditory memory activities. • Grammar and/or Sentence Structure • Questions • Development of speech sounds when teaching phonics. • Pronunciation tips 							
	<p>If not, why not?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I am currently teaching in Year 5 and all children are above stage 11 readers. • I am now based in secondary and generally the issues are different 							
3.	<p>Were there any barriers to you applying the strategies in the classroom?</p>	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>Yes</td> <td>No</td> </tr> <tr> <td>3</td> <td>8</td> </tr> <tr> <td>27%</td> <td>73%</td> </tr> </table> <p>If yes, what were the barriers?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Purely time constraints but all would be possible when time available. Nothing is too time consuming but just having time to get organised. • I work with several different groups with no consistency during the week. I also swap out with two other adults for literacy. • I think I don't have enough strategies for expressive language and I don't know enough for social communication skills. • For the last one, I think that a 40mn lesson is not long enough to apply social communication skills strategies. • According to the age group I work with, I find easier to apply strategies. Above all, as a teacher of French, I'd like to have more strategies to enable and support expressive language. 	Yes	No	3	8	27%	73%
Yes	No							
3	8							
27%	73%							
4.	<p>Are there strategies from the course that you would like to apply, but where you feel you need more training to increase your confidence to implement them?</p>	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>Yes</td> <td>No</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2</td> <td>9</td> </tr> <tr> <td>18%</td> <td>82%</td> </tr> </table> <p>If so, for which strategies would you like further training?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I would like more training to assist total lack of language knowledge...where to start • Expressive language and social communication skills. 	Yes	No	2	9	18%	82%
Yes	No							
2	9							
18%	82%							
5.	<p>Have you shared anything from the training course with colleagues?</p>	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>Yes</td> <td>No</td> </tr> <tr> <td>8</td> <td>3</td> </tr> <tr> <td>73%</td> <td>27%</td> </tr> </table>	Yes	No	8	3	73%	27%
Yes	No							
8	3							
73%	27%							

	<p>If yes, what?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A more general understanding and awareness of the progressive learning stages of speaking and reading. • Information carrying words • A bit of everything but mainly how memory works and the importance of the multi-sensory approach. • I have shared the story mapping • Mind maps and different levels of questioning. 							
6.	<p>Would you recommend the training course to others?</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Yes</th> <th>No</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>11</td> <td>0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>100%</td> <td></td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Yes	No	11	0	100%		
Yes	No							
11	0							
100%								
7.	<p>Would you like further training in speech, language and communication?</p> <table border="1"> <tr> <td>No response = 2 = 18%</td> </tr> </table> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Yes</th> <th>No</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>6</td> <td>3</td> </tr> <tr> <td>55%</td> <td>27%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	No response = 2 = 18%	Yes	No	6	3	55%	27%
No response = 2 = 18%								
Yes	No							
6	3							
55%	27%							
	<p>If yes, in what areas?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I am particularly interested in the area of speech and language in the assessment of children with possible ADHD and Autism. • How to apply it to swimming and the pool environment...for safety purposes. • All areas, a more advanced course to further improve my knowledge of speech and language development in young children. • Develop and support expressive language, social communication skills and reading. • Not necessarily further training but a short refresher course might be useful every 2 years or so. • Dealing with more specific problems • Linking to difficulties with verb structures - particularly children who seem to have difficulties with tense across more than one language. 							

Course Effectiveness & Participants' Confidence Ratings:

For the following questions, please answer 0 – 3 as appropriate.

Questions	0 - Not effective	1 - Quite effective	2 - Effective	3 - Very effective
How effective was the course in:				
a) Helping you to learn new skills		1	4	6
		9%	36%	55%
b) In changing your practice		1	8	2
		9%	73%	18%
c) Enabling you to develop children's listening and attention			10	1
			91%	9%
d) Enabling you to develop children's understanding			9	2
			82%	18%
e) Enabling you to develop children's expressive language		4	5	2
		36%	45%	18%
f) Enabling you to develop children's social skills	1	4	6	
	9%	36%	55%	
Questions	0 - Not confident	1 - Quite confident	2 - Confident	3 - Very confident
How confident are you in:				
a) Supporting children's listening and attention		1	7	3
		9%	64%	27%
b) Supporting children's understanding		1	8	2
		9%	73%	18%
c) Developing children's expressive language		1	7	3
		9%	64%	27%
d) Developing children's social skills		4	6	1
		36%	55%	9%
Do you have support from a Speech and Language Therapist?			Yes	No
			7	4
			64%	36%
If yes, please rate your confidence in working collaboratively with the Speech and Language Therapist.			1	6
			14%	86%

Summary

- **Ongoing use of strategies:** 82% of respondents reported that they continue to use the strategies they learned in the course, in particular listening & attention, multi-sensory approach, story strategies, mind maps, information carrying words and vocabulary building strategies. The 2 participants who reported they are no longer using the strategies explained that this was because they are now working with older students.
- **Barriers to applying the strategies:** 73% of respondents reported that there were no barriers to applying the strategies in the classroom. Of those that identified barriers, they included time constraints, working with a number of different classes and requiring more strategies for expressive language and social skills.
- **Strategies from the course where participants felt they needed further training before applying them:** 82% of respondents did not feel that they needed further training to implement the strategies covered, but those who did said they would like more support with:
 - Helping students with very limited language skills.
 - Developing expressive language.
 - Developing social skills.
- **Sharing and recommending the course:** 72% of respondents said that they had shared information from the course with colleagues, and 100% would recommend the course to others.
- **Suggestions for further training in speech, language and communication:**
 - A short refresher course.
 - A more advanced course.
 - ADHD and autism.
 - Expressive language, social communication skills and reading.
 - Dealing with more specific problems.
 - Verb Structures.
 - Swimming safety.
- **Course Effectiveness:** Ratings of 'effective' or 'very effective':

• Learning new skills and changing their practice	91%
• Enabling them to help children develop their:	
○ listening, attention and understanding	100%
○ expressive language	63%
○ social skills	55%

- **Participants' confidence in working with language and communication skills:** Ratings of 'confident' or 'very confident':

• Supporting listening, attention, understanding and expressive language	91%
• Developing children's social skills	64%

Conclusion

The Elklan *Speech & Language Support in the Classroom / for 5-11s* has been an effective training course over the long term, with 82% of respondents reporting they continue to use the strategies in the classroom, 73% sharing ideas learned with colleagues, and 100% would recommend the course to others.

The respondents felt that the course was particularly effective in helping them learn new skills, change their practice and enabling them to help children develop their listening, attention and understanding. 91% of respondents reported that they feel confident in supporting listening, attention, understanding and expressive language.

Areas where participants may benefit from further input in the future, based on the course effectiveness and confidence ratings are in helping children to develop their:

- Expressive language
- Social skills.

Suggestions for future staff training in Speech, Language and Communication

As a result of this questionnaire, the following options could be considered for future staff training in speech, language and communication.

- Specific workshops on helping children develop expressive language and social skills.
- Refresher course for those who have already attended the training.
- Running the full 10 week course again for those who have not yet had the opportunity to attend.
- As the number of staff working in Early Years / Foundation Stage increases, we could consider running the Elklan course *Speech & Language Support for 3 – 5s*.

Karen Lang
Speech & Language Therapist

December 2015