support session 4

module 4: supporting literacy and numeracy across the curriculum

approximate time – 2 hours

Preparation before the meeting

Arrange the desks in groups so that teachers are able to talk easily with each other. Make sure you have enough marker pens and flipchart paper for the brainstorms and feedback sessions.

You need to prepare by:

- setting up the DVD;
- making a set of cards to play the maths game (see below);
- writing the aims of the session on the blackboard or on a flipchart.

Make the set of cards to play the maths game. A set could consist of only ten cards that repeat a set of numerical mental sums or could include a wide range of sums, but the idea is to focus on one aspect of maths – such as simple division of numbers. The example given at the end of these support session materials has 22 different sums of simple multiplications. You should cut along the double lines and fold along the dotted lines so that you end up with 22 ‘cards’. Each card consists of one strip that contains a sum on the left and an answer on the right. Fold the sheet in half so you have the sum on the front and the answer on the back. Depending on how many teachers you have, you may need two sets of cards and they can play in two groups. (There are spaces given at the end of the example for you to write in more sums if you have a bigger group. Remember, the answer on the back must not be the answer to the sum on the front.)

Welcome

Welcome all the teachers again and ask them to sign the register. Explain that the aims of this support session for Module 4 are to:

- help extend the teachers’ understanding of the importance of literacy and numeracy across the curriculum;
- support teachers in identifying and investigating ways of encouraging students to engage in learning so they become competent literate and numerate citizens;
help them reflect on their teaching and develop skills to use a wider range of strategies to make learning more interactive.

Part 1: What does being literate and numerate mean to you?

Start the session by asking them in their groups to brainstorm ‘What does being literate and numerate mean to you?’ Give each group a piece of paper and a marker pen and ask one of the group to act as scribe. Ask them to put the question in the middle of the page and the group’s responses around the question. Give them 10–15 minutes to do this. Go around the groups, listening to their discussions and maybe participating by asking a question or commenting in a way that will challenge and extend their thinking.

Ask each group to display their sheets. They may have come up with all kinds of reasons, such as:

- it gives access to information;
- it is exciting to read stories;
- stories help to make sense of the world;
- it helps them to manage their own finances;
- it makes learning more interesting;
- they need it to fill in forms e.g. tax forms etc.

There will be many more the groups might suggest and you may ask them to comment briefly on their ideas and any differences among the groups. (Do not ask them to read what is written – everyone can do that for themselves – the main aim of the exercise is for the teachers to express just how useful and important being literate and numerate is in their lives.)

List the differences within any group on the board. Discuss as a whole group how different aspects are more relevant and important to different people, and acknowledge that this is what is to be expected. For example: some teachers will say that being literate is just about learning; others will talk about the pleasures being literate provides through plays and stories; others may say how being literate helps them to do practical tasks such as read bills or contracts. With regard to numeracy, some may say how it helps them to manage their finances and others may say it helps them to play games. This listing of differences should enable you to discuss with the teachers the range of purposes for literacy and the types of...
literacy listed in Unit 13 on page 2. You could also ask the teachers to refer to these or write them on the board.

Next, ask them in their groups to share what it means to be literate in their subject, be it science, mathematics, history, geography or anything else. Add to the list any new ideas that are expressed about literacy and its purpose in this regard, if they arise.

Now explain that, as we all know how important literacy and numeracy is to our lives, they are going to explore how they can help the students they teach to become more literate and numerate.

Ask them to discuss the following as a whole group:

- What particular skills in literacy and numeracy do students need to be competent in each teacher’s subject and in their own lives?
- Are these answers different to what they have said about literacy and numeracy for themselves?

Their answers will show that the needs of both students and adults are similar. The next step is to explore the approaches and the specific skills needed, and look at ways of developing these in students, but to ensure that they are relevant and interesting so that students learn more effectively.

Ask the teachers to discuss in their groups what specific reading skills students need to be able to read information texts across the subjects. List these on the board.

Their responses may include scanning texts, phonics, spelling, writing skills, recognising numbers, interpreting graphs and measuring accurately. There are many more.

### Part 2: Strategies and activities to promote literacy and numeracy

Show the video all the way through. Before they watch, ask them to look out for the many different ways the teachers in the video support students’ learning – either directly or through the way the teacher has organised the environment to help the learners.

Next, ask the teachers to think of different strategies and activities they could use with students to develop these skills and understandings. Use the video as a starting point for their discussions. Some teachers may have tried some of the
activities in the Units in Module 4. If so, ask them to share their experiences with
their group, especially how they planned the activity, what went well and how they
knew this. Ask them also to comment on the students’ reactions to the different
ways of working they used. All of this will stimulate the teachers to think of other
strategies and ways of working to engage students.

Give them at least 15 minutes to talk. As they talk, circulate around the groups
listening to the discussions and picking up ideas that may be worth sharing with
the whole group.

Bring the whole group together. Ask some of the groups, where you know they
have interesting strategies and activities that they have used or might use in class,
to share a specific activity or strategy.

Then ask if any groups or individual teachers would like to comment on what they
have just heard. It is important to let the teachers talk about all aspects of using
these activities and strategies. The teachers need to be able to ask questions about
how to plan, organise and support these activities in the classroom, and to hear
from others who have tried them about the benefits and impact on the students.

Part 3: Strategies to develop literacy – students’
scanning skills

Ask the whole group to think about their own subject specialism and how they
might develop and use students’ scanning skills. What kinds of activities could they
set up for a class, groups or individuals?

Give the teachers a few minutes before asking them to share their suggestions of
ways they could develop students’ scanning skills. Ask them to think about how
they could organise their classroom and the students, and plan and resource their
lessons.

Again, it is important that the teachers are given time to share ideas of different
ways of working. These could include using group work, having a joint task for
students, working in pairs, or using pictures, music or artefacts to stimulate interest.

Part 4: Strategies to develop numeracy – playing a
number game

This activity is for the teachers to have five minutes of fun near the end of the
session, but also to experience the fun of using games in class.
Give out the sets of cards (see the example at the end of this support session, but you could make your own set of sums to reinforce another mathematical concept, such as writing simple problems to solve).

**Rules of play**

1. Give each person one card, but ask them to not let their neighbours see what they have. On one side there is a simple sum or problem, and on the reverse is an answer to a sum (but not the sum they have).

2. Explain that you will ask one person to start by reading out their sum and then the person with the correct answer must stand up quickly (as several sums will have the same answer).

3. The first to stand up gives their answer – the rest sit back down. If the answer is correct, then that person then reads out their sum and the process continues like this until everybody has had a turn or they have had enough.

4. If the person who stood up first gets the answer wrong, they sit back down and the next person who stood up has a go at getting the correct answer to that sum. The more the participants know the number bonds for these sums, the quicker the game can be.

After playing the game, collect in the cards. Ask teachers to think about what they have just been doing and to think what their students would learn from this game. Ask them to think in terms of knowledge, skills, motivation etc. List these. Ask the teachers to think of ways to modify the game to focus on other areas in mathematics or even in other subjects, and how the game could help students learn key facts.

Finally, ask the teachers to talk about the impact on their students of these ways of working. What difference would it make or has it made to their students’ attitudes to learning and school? To their work? To their behaviour? To their understanding of the subject or topic?

Close the support session by thanking them all for their participation, ideas and enthusiasm. Encourage them to go back to school and try just one or two ideas out with one class first and see the impact they have on student motivation and learning.
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Figure 5: Template for the numeracy card game.