

Docklands Learning Acceleration Project

The Urban Learning Foundation
56 East India Dock Road, London E14 6JE
Telephone 0171 537 1329 Fax 0171 537 1331
E-mail 100744.1347@COMPUSERVE.COM



Funded by
London Docklands
Development
Corporation

11 June 1996

DOCKLANDS LITERACY PUPILS REACH FOR SKY HIGH STANDARDS!

One of the UK's most innovative literacy initiatives involving 600 seven-year olds in 14 primary schools and one special school in East London celebrates its first birthday today (11 June) with a range of literacy activities and the release of 600 "story" balloons, one for each child in the project.

The National Literacy Association Docklands Learning Acceleration Project uses the latest multi-media and portable technology (including Acorn Pocket Book palm top computers) in a £1 million initiative largely funded by the London Docklands Development Corporation (LDDC) to improve literacy and numeracy standards amongst school children in the Docklands areas of Newham, Southwark and Tower Hamlets in East London. It aims to double literacy and numeracy attainments within two years.

Today's celebrations mark the first anniversary of the two year pilot project and are jointly hosted by Michael Pickard, LDDC Chairman, and Professor David Crystal, Chair of the National Literacy Association (NLA), with TV and Radio presenter James Whale as master of ceremonies.

Activities at the participating schools include bookmaking workshops and visits by writers Steve Turner, Vivian French, Chris Moorcroft and Verner Wilkins while the pupils of Seven Mills Primary School on the Isle of Dogs are releasing 600 balloons carrying the opening lines of stories written by each participating child. It is hoped that the balloons will be returned by whoever finds them with the stories completed.

In June 1995, ten schools in Tower Hamlets and Southwark were each issued with ten multi-media machines fitted with Integrated Learning Systems, a structured learning and recording programme which manages children's learning.

more/...

The Project acknowledges the generous support of: The Earnie Fairbairn Trust, Ronald McDonald Children's Charities, School Book Fairs Ltd, Systems Integrated Research Ltd, Xemplar Education.
The National Literacy Association (Charity No 1002013) is supported by: Association of Educational Psychologists, Association of Teachers and Lecturers, Book Bus, British Dyslexia Association, Campaign for State Education, English-Speaking Union, National Association for the Teaching of English, National Association of Head Teachers, National Association of Schoolmasters/Union of Women Teachers, National Union of Teachers, Professional Association of Teachers, Publishers' Association, The Newspaper Society.

Using ILS Global software designed specially by Systems Integrated Research (SiR) to be compatible with the National Curriculum Maths and English, the machine initially tests each child, sets an appropriate starting level and then proceeds through the programme at the child's own learning pace. If children encounter difficulties, the machine will take them on a sideways journey until they understand the principle and can successfully re-join the programme of interactive tasks. Each child is committed to spending 20 minutes at their machine every day while teachers can use the data provided by the machines to assess the progress of their pupils and create individual diagnostic work plans.

Five schools in Newham have dedicated four of their Acorn machines - supplied by the LDDC in a separate scheme - to the project. Although the schools here have been using more traditional software, the children are still given the same concentrated and systematic access to the machines as elsewhere.

Parental and community involvement is being positively encouraged by making equipment and software available after school hours. 450 Acorn Pocket Book palm top computers have also been supplied to the schools for use at home as well as in the classroom.

Ray Barker, Project Co-ordinator, said: "This is a literacy not an IT initiative. The technology is only one tool for learning and is supported by more traditional methods. For example, McDonalds is funding Reading Corners in each of the schools, with School Book Fairs also providing support. Group work, drama and poetry workshops are also being employed to motivate children at school and to involve their parents at home."

The teachers have so far been impressed. The children have surpassed all adult expectations in their use of the sophisticated technology while the project as a whole has raised their motivation to learn. "The children are quite noticeably showing a more positive attitude towards reading and writing," commented Ray Barker.

more/...

LDDC Chairman Michael Pickard said: "Employment opportunities for Docklands residents increasingly depends on sound basic skills, particularly in English and Maths. The NLA Docklands Learning Acceleration Project will give 600 of our younger residents a better start in life as well as highlighting a positive way forward in the effort to raise literacy and numeracy standards locally. These are simple but essential requirements demanded by the new employers relocating to the area."

Professor David Crystal, Chair of the National Literacy Association, said: "For far too long literacy has been an educational Cinderella. Now we want all children to go to the ball. This project is helping to show that full literacy for all children need not be a fairy tale. It can be achieved!"

- ends -

For further information contact:

LDDC Press Office	Tel: 0171-512 8412 (office hours) 0171-512 0444 0171-512 3000 (after hours)
	Fax: 0171-512 0222
Ray Barker	Tel: 0171-537 1329
NLA DLAP	Fax: 0171-537 1331
Charlie Griffiths	Tel: 01425-272232
NLA	Fax: 01425-275062

NOTE TO EDITORS

1. Project Funding and Sponsorship

- **The London Docklands Development Corporation (LDDC) contributed over £600,000 to the project with £300,000 from the National Literacy Association (NLA)**
- **Expertise has been made available by NLA member organisations including the Federation of Children's Book Groups, Newspapers in Education and the British Dyslexia Association.**
- **McDonalds have funded Reading Corners in each of the participating schools with School Book Fairs Ltd also providing reading material.**
- **Poets, writers and Theatre in Education groups have offered their services to work in the schools. WH Smith has donated one of its "Poets in Schools" places to the project.**
- **Systems Integrated Research (SiR) are developing "Talking Screen" software for the London Docklands schools, licensed exclusively for use by the three local education authorities (Newham, Southwark and Tower Hamlets).**
- **Local Education Business Partnerships have been approached to foster partnerships between groups of schools and business interests.**

2. The London Docklands Development Corporation (LDDC)

The LDDC was created in 1981 to secure the physical, economic and social regeneration of London's former port area, some eight square miles on both sides on the River Thames between London Bridge and Gallion's Reach in Beckton. In the last eight years, the Corporation has invested £28 million to enhance education facilities within the area, including a £4 million project to equip local schools with networked computer systems. Docklands is now believed to have the highest concentration of computers in schools in the country.

3. The National Literacy Association (NLA)

The NLA is an umbrella organisation whose executive committee is formed from representatives of a number of educational organisations including five teacher organisations. It aims to promote the view and have it universally accepted that every child who needs extra help for whatever reason to acquire the fundamental skills of reading, writing and spelling must receive that help.