

A partnership approach to early literacy attainment raising with unaccompanied minors



Liz Ferguson, Widening Participation Officer

University of East Anglia

e.ferguson@uea.ac.uk



The partnership, and UEA as a University of Sanctuary



- Partnership between UEA, Norfolk Virtual School, and Norwich City College
- Part of UEA's work focusing on Widening Participation strategic groups
- Supporting FE provider to raise attainment amongst English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) cohort; specifically aiming to support the educational attainment of unaccompanied minors
- UEA recognised as a University of Sanctuary in January 2018
- Sanctuary Coordinators offer holistic support for forced migrant applicants, students, and staff at UEA. Creating a culture of welcome within UEA's campus community and beyond

ESOL courses and progression routes



- ESOL levels offered at the College: pre-entry, Entry 1, Entry 2, Entry 3, Level 1, Level 2

- Applicants sit a controlled assessment within the College to determine their study level

- Classes for 16-18 year olds and adults

- Some combine with Functional Skills (Maths), English Skills & Culture, or Employability & Citizenship

- Progression routes depend on prior qualifications, immigration status, provision offered in the region

- Funding for HE study can be a significant barrier

Reading Partners



- Created in response to student feedback
- Needed to be flexible and appropriate for varying levels of literacy and spoken English
- Resources, staffing, timetabling, and space within the College
- Enhanced training provided to UEA Student Ambassadors
- Successes and challenges

“You could see the development where it became safe to make mistakes in reading. Students moving from nervousness to settling into their own reading, reading pace and self-correcting. A developing ownership of own reading”.

ESOL Tutor

Impact evaluation – objectives & methods



Objectives:

- Access and experience appropriate attainment-raising interventions [*Intellectual*]
- Establish a positive association with Higher Education and the UEA community [*Habitus*]

Participation is tracked on Higher Education Access Tracker (HEAT)

Tutor assessments and feedback

Extensive qualitative data from UEA Ambassadors

“[Student A] has made incredible progress this year. He started in the pre entry group and moved up a level - he has even started reading EL3 books.”

“[Student B] struggled quite a lot today. It seems to me as though the words he is confident reading out are perhaps ones he has memorised. We focused on learning how to sound out unfamiliar words by breaking them into chunks.”

Survey responses from UEA Student Ambassadors

Impact evaluation - outcomes



Benefits extended beyond the original aims of reading progression; motivation, social skills

Improvements in confidence reading aloud, pronunciation, expression, comprehension and fluency

UEA Ambassadors described the scheme as being enjoyable, worthwhile, beneficial, and rewarding

Evidence that building rapport and monitoring progress is easier when pairings are consistent

“[The student] asked questions about different words, and about the story itself, to make sure he understood. He commented on how important the scheme is to him because it provided him with 1-1 time to help improve his reading. **UEA Student Ambassador**

“This student’s reading ability has improved in a couple of different ways over the course of the scheme...the Reading Partner was able to help her slow down and pause in the right places, such as at commas and full stops, which she appears to have picked up quickly. As a result, this also helped to improve her pronunciation [and] her comprehension of text.” **Summary of findings for one participant**

Sources of information



UEA University of Sanctuary
www.ueasanctuary.org

Universities of Sanctuary UK
<https://universities.cityofsanctuary.org/>

Displaced Student Opportunities UK
www.displacedstudent.org.uk

Student Action for Refugees
www.star-network.org.uk

Liz Ferguson, UEA
e.ferguson@uea.ac.uk

“This project has been so much more than improving reading. It’s been about students being valued, building different relationships within the college. ...We have seen them thrive when the right kind of support is put in place.”

ESOL Tutor

“It was just a dream for me to study at UEA as I did not have the right to apply for finance. As an asylum seeker, the sanctuary scholarship was my only chance, I had no other way to access higher education.”

UEA Sanctuary Scholar

A partnership approach to early literacy attainment raising with unaccompanied minors



Liz Ferguson, Widening Participation Officer

University of East Anglia

e.ferguson@uea.ac.uk

