Chapter 7
Let’s Get Set for University!
(The Springschool Experience for Disabled Students)

Helen Smith
Leeds Metropolitan University, UK

ABSTRACT
This chapter considers the importance of pro-actively engaging disabled learners in events and activities that seek to encourage their participation in Higher Education. It examines the need to engage these students as early as possible in their educational careers. The impact of government agendas, as well as a discussion of the barriers that such students currently face, will then be addressed. Following this, there will be a detailed analysis of how a West Yorkshire regional partnership has tackled these issues in order to make that transition to university smoother. Particular attention will be made to young people’s experience of taking part in two-day workshops known as Springschools.

INTRODUCTION
The purpose of this chapter is to demonstrate that transition to Higher Education (HE) for disabled learners can and should start a long time before a student reaches the point where they are ready to fill in an application form. In many instances, in order that a student even considers university as a possibility, a lot of groundwork needs to be done on the part of schools, colleges, local education authorities, universities and not least the students themselves. Transition to higher education poses many issues for all students, however for students with additional support needs there is no escaping the fact that there are extra barriers that need
to be dealt with in order that this transition is as smooth as possible.

The chapter will therefore also consider the impact of the government’s widening participation agenda on HE participation in recent years, in particular its drive to increase both the numbers of young people participating in higher education and the proportion of people from under-represented groups. An outline description of the current English education system will allow for a fuller understanding of how each part of the system deals with disabled students and how these differences impact on learners. Subsequent barriers to HE will be discussed, including how terminology can potentially cause confusion for education staff as well as students themselves.

Importantly, the bulk of the chapter will be devoted to considering the strategies and activity ‘widening participation’ have inspired. In particular, it will focus on work undertaken in one particular region, West Yorkshire, UK, to encourage young disabled students into considering higher education as a serious option. The activities and reasoning behind them will be discussed in detail before future developments are outlined in the concluding paragraphs.

BACKGROUND

Brief Summary of the Present Education System in England

Increasing numbers of disabled pupils in England are now educated in a mainstream setting rather than in specialist schools. To better understand the nature of the issues, controversies and problems that surround aspiration and awareness raising work with disabled learners, it is first essential to briefly describe the current school system in England. The same system also operates in Wales.

The school academic year starts on 1st September and runs through to 31st August the following year. Children start school in England in the academic year in which they will reach the age of 5. Typically a child will attend a primary school between the ages of 4 and 11 followed by attendance at a secondary school or college until the age of 16, when compulsory schooling ends. In some areas middle schools exist which usually see the learner transfer from primary school to middle school at the age of 9 and then from middle school to secondary school at the age of 13.

Some schools and colleges also have post 16 provision which is available to a learner until the age of 19 whilst others require the learner to transfer to a specific post 16 provider, known as a Further Education (FE) college or a Sixth Form college.

The compulsory school years are divided into 4 Key Stages of Learning. The first year of school is called the Foundation Year, typically known as Year Reception. Key Stage 1, (Years 1 and 2) takes place between ages 5 and 7; Key Stage 2, (Years 3, 4, 5 and 6) takes place between ages 7 and 11. Key Stage 3 (traditionally Years, 7, 8 and 9) takes place between ages 11 and 14 with Key Stage 4 (traditionally Years 10 and 11) between ages 14 and 16, culminating in assessment in nationally recognised qualifications such as General Certificates in Secondary Education (GCSEs), BTECs (awarded by the Business and Technology Education Council) and Diplomas.

Until recently in England, National Curriculum Assessment tests, more commonly known as SATs took place in maths, English and science at the end of each of the first three Key Stages followed by GCSE examinations (and/or BTECs or Diplomas) in all subject areas at the end of the final year of compulsory schooling. However, tests at the end of Key Stage 3 were abolished in 2008 following issues with marking. In West Yorkshire at least, this end to Key Stage 3 testing has resulted in a significant number of schools condensing Key Stage 3 learning in to 2 years, thus allowing 3 years, Years 9, 10 and 11 to be devoted to Key Stage 4.
Related Content

Let's Move!: The Social and Health Contributions From Pokémon GO

Affordances and Constraints of Scaffolded Learning in a Virtual World for Young Children
Rebecca W. Black and Stephanie M. Reich (2011). *International Journal of Game-Based Learning* (pp. 52-64). www.igi-global.com/article/affordances-constraints-scaffolded-learning-virtual/53834?camid=4v1a

Overcoming the Barriers to Uptake: A Study of 6 Danish Health-Based Serious Games Projects

Gamification and Smart Feedback: Experiences with a Primary School Level Math App
Michael D. Kickmeier-Rust, Eva-C. Hillemann and Dietrich Albert (2014). *International Journal of Game-Based Learning* (pp. 35-46). www.igi-global.com/article/gamification-and-smart-feedback/117698?camid=4v1a