

InFOCUS

WINTER 2019
ISSUE 45 VOLUME 1



READ INTERVIEW
ON *page 18.*

**DARK MOFO
ACCESS PROGRAM**

BY TRACEY HANIGAN

agosci
inc.

Announcing...the new LightWRITER



Hello... I'm the
new LightWRITER



The SL50 LightWRITER:

- Is Lighter *so easier to carry*
- Has Australian speech with vocal smileys *for fun intonation and to get attention*
- Has a Small footprint *so doesn't intrude*
- Has Two displays *for face-to-face communication*
- Has a Backlit keyboard *so you can type in low light*
- Has scanning in built *to accommodate changing access needs.*

See SL50 at the AGOSCI conference in Perth

- The Zyteq stand will have the LightWRITER SL50 and Zyteq team to assist.
- We hope to see you there!
Karyn, Tracey & Leanne

Trial

- A quick one-week hire is available
- If you are in Melbourne, you can make an appointment to come in to try out the SL50
- Please contact us to start the ball rolling
- support@zyteq.com.au
- (03) 9696 2944

More information

- Our recent Facebook Live Q and A session will be on our website so you can hear about the details such as battery life, how to store memories, use the vocal smileys and more.
- www.zyteq.com.au

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Rose Rogers Creative

AGOSCI In Focus is the National Magazine of the AGOSCI Inc. (formerly Australian Group on Severe Communication Impairment). AGOSCI In Focus is a bi-annual magazine and is available to members of AGOSCI. It contains information from and about national seminars, research, new communication technology, resources in the AAC field, news from overseas, and contributions from people who use AAC.

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CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT

It has been yet another busy 12 months as Chair of AGOSCI. We began by providing significant financial sponsorship for our members who use AAC to attend the ISAAC conference on the Gold Coast, where the exec team also staffed an information booth – thanks to ISAAC for their support of our booth at no cost. This was followed by our yearly national exec face to face strategic planning meeting. Also in the second half of last year we held two national PD events, our biennial National Tour, and the Literacy Intensive. The National Tour was a strong and timely topic of responding to abuse and neglect of people who use AAC, and was a high level presentation from SCOPE. Attendances were lower than other National Tours, but it was well received, so many thanks go to coordinator Seb Noac and the wonderful presenting team. The Literacy Intensive was again successful in that it was fully booked out and well received by many participants.

The New Year turned a new leaf for AGOSCI, as we employed two staff to help us meet our organization goals – Ria Ferris as PD Coordinator, and Ed Johnson as our NDIS consultant. Thanks to them for their efforts so far.

Our magazine In-Focus continues to come out with great articles, and a big thanks to Jess Preston who continues to do this in her first year in the role as editor.

This year we have had a busy team preparing for our conference in Perth at the end of August. I urge everyone to make an effort to get to the conference, as it is an amazing looking program, and our friends in the West would love to see as many of us there as possible. Also this year our PD program will include more webinars, and State based PD provide on demand. Sadly we will not be hosting a Literacy Intensive this year, and as a strong regular contributor to the AGOSCI revenue budget over the last few years, we will need to very carefully plan future budgets.

Looking ahead we are in the final throws of securing a 2020 National Tour speaker, and a state to host the 2021 conference.



Publicity wise this last 12 months we have attended the Source Kids expo, AATC (ARATA) conference, and as mentioned before, the ISAAC conference. Thanks to all the exec who supported these initiatives with their time. Upcoming we have a trade display at the SPA conference in Brisbane next week.

AGOSCI continues to formally link in with SPA for a national approach to Communication Access, NDIS feedback forums, and with ARATA through its wider alliance called NATA.

The exec continues to meet every 2 months via teleconference. I wish to thank those exec who finished up their roles today or over the last 12 months – Seb Noac PD Coordinator, Ciara-Lucy Forrest at NT rep, Kirsty Holcomb (publicity) and Karyn Muscat and Georgia Burn Vic Rep. Again Mel and Tracey are the workhorses of AGOSCI, and my many thanks goes to them.

There are many more things we have been up to, and I'll let the rest of the exec share that with you.

:: DARREN TRENTEPOHL

SECRETARY'S REPORT



Well hi again to everyone,

We've had a pretty good year so far for memberships with around 366 members which is one of the highest totals we have had and maybe our all-time highest. Most members are now using our online registration which is great. As a reminder I would urge again all members who are not using our online membership option from the website and who use EFT as your payment to also email or post a copy of your membership form to me. Especially if your organisation is paying - I would just remind them to also post the membership form as this will make it easier to process your membership. It gets a little tricky sometimes trying to match a name with no other identifying information.

I have been busy typing up minutes and processing memberships and member enquiries. We had a little glitch at the start of the year with our new 2-year membership option which both Tracey and I worked through. I also had the pleasure of manning the AGOSCI table with Darren at the recent Speech Pathology Australia Conference in Brisbane. It was a great conference and I enjoyed meeting the delegates who came to the AGOSCI table to learn more about AGOSCI. So far I think we have had around 25 people join from the conference which is great.

Many thanks again to all the members who have joined this year. We value your membership and strive to provide an Organisation that you wish to belong to. I look forward to seeing you in Perth for the AGOSCI conference.

Thanks also to everyone who has contributed to the listserv. I have enjoyed the discussions and the information everyone has contributed and shared.

Keep up the good work.

:: MELISSA BAKES

TREASURER'S REPORT

Hi everyone,

I recently shared AGOSCI's financial report for 2018 with members at the last AGM. I'm pleased to report that AGOSCI posted a profit of \$24, 044 last year. The major income was from the literacy intensive held in Brisbane, memberships, the National tour and Newcastle PODD workshop. The professional learning activities that AGOSCI runs help to cover our running costs, including expenses such as managing our website, hosting webinars, publishing and posting the AGOSCI in focus magazine, book keeping and auditing fees, the annual executive face to face meeting and paying honorariums for some of the executive. We were also able to provide \$10,000 worth of scholarships for some of our members who use AAC to attend the ISAAC conference on the Gold coast.

In 2019, the majority of our income is expected through memberships and the provision of professional learning opportunities for members. This year we will not be running a literacy intensive and the conference is expected to be cost neutral. In addition to our usual running expenses, we have also got some new budget items which include funding a paid PD coordinator position for 1 day a week and funding our NDIS project role which is due to wind up at the end of September. We will again be providing a significant amount of funding for AAC users to attend our biennial conference in Perth. With these increased running costs, we are looking to offer some alternate professional development opportunities for members to cover the costs.

I look forward to seeing you in Perth!

:: TRACEY HANIGAN



AIF EDITOR

Hello AGOSCI In Focus Readers,

Wow, what a whirlwind the last 6 months have been since I commenced in the role as Editor. Here in Queensland we are riding the wave that is NDIS roll out and all the changes that it brings. Across the internet, we are seeing more and more accessible information and personal stories from people who use AAC and or the people who are supporting them. It can be at times, overwhelming to try to absorb all of the information, points of view and determine what information will be a useful addition to ones AAC knowledge and toolbox. Knowing what to include and what to contribute to the biannual AIF can be similarly overwhelming.

If you are passionate about something or if you know someone that has a journey they are willing to share, I encourage you/ them to submit an article for our next issue. I feel that this edition of AIF is reflective of some of the changes we are experiencing in the world of AAC. Pulling the articles together has reminded me that despite the ever changing landscape that is the world of AAC - the AGOSCI community is still alive, vibrant and eclectic as it always has been. Our members and contributors are a varied bunch of people who always seem to write from the heart and about what they know the best. I

hope you enjoy this somewhat belated edition and I am grateful for the patience the readers have shown as I am learning the ins and outs of AGOSCI and AIF.

:: JESSICA PRESTON

STATE REPORTS

QUEENSLAND

AGOSCI QLD Rep Update – Winter 2019

It has been another fun six months for AGOSCI in Queensland. In March I presented a webinar on the rejection and abandonment of AAC systems. We had a great response to this webinar, and it is available online free for members for those who missed out.

“ **AGOSCI ALSO HAD A STAND AT THE JOINT NEW ZEALAND SPEECH THERAPISTS ASSOCIATION AND SPEECH PATHOLOGY AUSTRALIA CONFERENCE IN BRISBANE. THIS WAS A GREAT OPPORTUNITY TO TALK TO SPEECH PATHOLOGISTS ABOUT AAC AND THE COMMUNITY THAT AGOSCI PROVIDES.**

We have also been busy planning an Introductory PODD Workshop for Brisbane. Due to the overwhelming response to the first event in July, we are planning to add a second workshop later in the year.

Keep your eye on the AGOSCI Facebook page for more details!

:: ALISON MOORCROFT



NEW SOUTH WALES

Hi everyone,

Winter is here and NSW would love to hear from the community for ideas of what people would like to see held or run in Sydney!

Please send feedback to us via email to agoscinsw@agosci.org.au. We look forward to hearing your ideas and setting plans in motion.

Stay warm,

:: CECILIA & SABRINA
NSW co-representatives



VICTORIA

Victoria welcomes two new representatives Stephanie Weir and Lisa Ho.

Stephanie and Lisa look forward to meeting everyone and learning about their new roles.



NORTHERN TERRITORY

The girls up in NT have had a busy 6 months spreading the word about AGOSCI at the new regional hospital in Palmerston and in other regions. In Alice their have been a few attempts to host an AAC picnic / morning tea but mother nature in all her glory has had other plans (rain, heat). Links with major service providers including Anglicare, ARRCs, NT Friendships, MHACA - Mental Health Association of Central Australia are currently being fostered.

:: AMY & FRANCES

Speech Pathologists



AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

ACOSCI ACT has been busy with liaising with the University of Canberra Speech Pathology Masters program, delivering lectures to upcoming Speech Pathologists around AAC and working with individuals with complex communication needs. The University is keen to work with AGOSCI to create more opportunities and events for AAC users and improve their students confidence and knowledge around supporting AAC.

Also in recent months I have been receiving feedback from members and individuals around the community regarding what kind of professional development they'd like to see come to the ACT. Our partnership with Malkara School in 2018 saw PODD training come to the ACT for the first time in a long time and we'd love to create more opportunities for our members to access some of the great workshops and training that are currently touring the nation, but seem to forget us in the ACT!

Stay tuned for more info in October for our annual AAC picnic, and this year we're aiming for an adult focused one too. If you know of anyone who may like to attend, or a great place we can go, send me an email.

Looking forward to the conference and seeing some familiar faces!

Warm regards,

:: JESS DETHICK

ACT representative



WESTERN AUSTRALIA

AGOSCI wa have had a busy year so far preparing for the Perth conference, as well as upholding our regular website and list serve portfolios. We are now officially 3 months out from the conference so things are really ramping up in terms of conference organising commitments. We have a very hard working conference committee who are all working hard to make the Perth conference an amazing one!

Registrations have opened and we have already seen some registrations which awesome! Scholarship applications are also open - both for the AGOSCI national scholarships, as well as the Lotterywest scholarship that conference conveyors Kelly and Sally were able to secure to help our rural and remote WA families get to the conference in Perth. We hope to support as many families and people with complex communication needs to attend the conference as we can through both these scholarships, as well as the overall subsidised registration rate for our AAC users.

We have also teamed with Scope to translate many of the conference documents into easy English - look out for these coming in the lead up to the conference.

We're excited to have you all over to Perth in August!

:: YVETTE & FREYA

WA co-representatives

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Since the last update AGOSCI SA has been active within the community. I have had the opportunity to speak about AGOSCI and promote the upcoming Perth conference at the AAC Educators Group; this group brings together educators and speech pathologists from all sectors of education across SA.

In April the second AGOSCI SA picnic was held at the inclusive playground at Bonython Park, the picnic was well attended by AAC users, their families and educators. The afternoon certainly was fun and interactive with lots of AAC in use!

Another picnic will be organised in October to celebrate AAC Awareness Month, I look forward to seeing everyone there.

:: JODIE WHITFORD



SHARING OF JOURNEYS

STUDYING AAC AT ECU

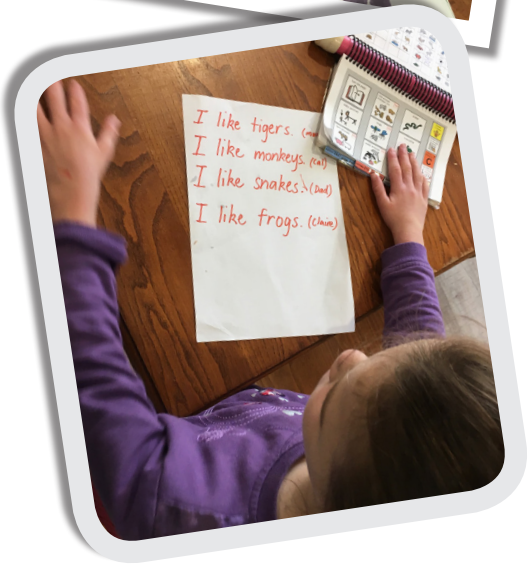
My initial interest in AAC developed in response to the needs of my daughter, and the likelihood that speech was never going to fully meet her complex communication needs. As I have engaged more with AAC, my interest has grown, and I was keen to consolidate my learning through some postgraduate study. I came across the Graduate Certificate of Education (Special Education: Complex Communication Needs) just in time to enrol for the 2018 academic year. While Edith Cowan University is in Perth, Western Australia, and I live and work in Queensland, I was able to enrol for online courses. I decided to complete just one unit at a time to find best balance with home life and my work commitments as an advisory teacher, as well as to have an opportunity to really focus on the course materials.

The first unit I completed was EDU5315 – Complex Communication Needs: Literacy, Language and Communication Instruction for All.

Throughout the course, there was a huge emphasis on comprehensive literacy instruction. I learnt the importance of literacy instruction and communication being taught simultaneously. Participation in group assignments and case studies allowed deeper understanding to be formed through connecting with others with an interest in AAC from a range of professions. Working collaboratively with other teachers and parents, as well as speech therapists and occupational therapists to consider real-life scenarios was rewarding and beneficial to my understanding of AAC and literacy instruction for students with complex communication needs. My interactions with my daughter when reading books and participating in writing tasks became much more engaging for us both and she developed a love of reading that was not evident before.

My next focus unit was EDU5310 – Complex Communication Needs: Being an Effective Communication Partner.

Throughout this unit, I was able to learn more about effective partner techniques, and to practice these and share videos of practice with my fellow students. I felt my capacity to model for AAC users improve significantly as I understood the importance of using a range of pragmatic functions, across multiple contexts. The power of personal reflection and being able to be a critical friend to others who were improving their skills was significant in increasing my confidence as a communication partner for my daughter, and in my work. I felt better equipped to support others to develop their capability as effective communication partners too. Again, opportunity to collaborate across disciplines was valuable, and I have made connections with other students that have continued beyond our shared study.





Things that have helped me improve my Communication Partner skills:

Making sure AAC is always readily available

Acknowledging all efforts to communicate (no matter how she chooses to communicate)

Taking turns communicating - using a mix of modelling and interpreting messages

Communicating about anything and everything! Make it fun and make it real so that is valuable to her

Showing others how they can model too (especially siblings and peers - they are the best and they are who she wants to talk with!)

Stopping talking so much (me) and giving her a chance to respond

Setting small goals as a partner to increase modelling

Sharing successes - I take photos, share to Facebook, and keep a diary at home to share with her team

Surrounding myself with others who are building their communication partner skills too (for me, this has been fellow students, AAC parents, and a community of professionals in my local region)

Attending events and activities with an AAC focus (camps, conferences, catch ups)

This year I have participated in an independent study project as part of my course work, and spent first semester reviewing literature around peer interactions for AAC users, something that has been a priority for our family in relation to my daughter's communication goals. I have used the knowledge and information I have gained to compile a practical resource for teachers of beginning communicators in mainstream settings. I will be presenting about this at the AGOSCI conference in August in Perth, something I would not have had the confidence to do without participating in study in this area. I look forward to exploring this area further in Semester 2, and completing my requirements for the course.

A new unit has now been added to the course that is currently only being offered on campus in Perth; EDU5320 – Positive Behaviour Support for Students with Complex Needs. When it becomes available online, I am sure that I won't be able to help myself from enrolling in further study to be able to learn more in this area too. It is easy to take on the additional work of studying when it is something that is of such high interest, and is clearly having a significant impact on the communication success of my daughter too.

“ **I RECOMMEND THIS COURSE TO ANYONE WHO TELLS ME THEY ARE INTERESTED IN AAC, OR WHO HAS RESPONSIBILITY TO WORK WITH STUDENTS WHO HAVE COMPLEX COMMUNICATION NEEDS.** ”

I have found the content to be inciteful and beneficial in my roles of parent and teacher. I am excited that this opportunity exists in Australia, and that there are so many taking the opportunity to expand their learning in this field.



BY HANNAH GUTKE

**SUMMARY OF AAC LECTURE SERIES
PART ONE 'AAC IN THE
INCLUSIVE CLASSROOM'.**

BY AMELIA, MICHAELA & HARRY



On the 27th of March, Two Way Street presented the first lecture in a planned series about AAC in the inclusive classroom. Over 50 people attended to hear from Harry, a Year 2 student and AAC user, his Mum Michaela and Harry’s speech pathologist Amelia. Harry was introduced to PODD at the age of 2, and currently uses PODD 60 on an i110 communication device as his primary communication tool.

Harry got the evening off to a brilliant start. He told the captive crowd about his time at school, including that he is learning to read and that he loves to give his friends high-fives in the playground.

Harry’s Mum Michaela then spoke about her experience navigating the path to school and why

they chose an inclusive education setting for Harry. When speaking about enrolling Harry in school, Michaela reflected that “if a school questions having your child there, question if they deserve the privilege of having your child there”. Michaela spoke about the learning curve since Harry had started school, and how Harry’s time at school has been an overwhelmingly positive experience.

Amelia, Harry’s speech pathologist, then provided some strategies that can be useful in supporting students who use AAC in inclusive settings, including the importance of providing education for peers as well as school staff.

This lecture was the first in a series of lectures about AAC in inclusive education settings planned for this year. The lectures are recorded and are able to be accessed via the TwoWay Street website

➔ www.twowaystreet.com.au

GIVE THE BOY A CHANCE BLOG

HARRY SAYS... THE SPORTS CHAT EDITION

APRIL 21, 2019

HARRY “Hit him with the Euro step!”

If that line means nothing to you, I’m guessing that you’re celebrating Easter today blissfully unaware that it is in fact the NBA playoffs. Welcome to my house, where excessive chocolate bunny and hot cross bun consumption is paired with 2 boys sitting on the couch, shouting at the TV.

Yes, 2 boys, both shouting – thanks to Harry’s new Sports Chat page on his device, he is just as capable as Jamie of whining about the ref and yelling basketball-isms that mean nothing to me, but are creating some pretty amazing dad son bonding.

As a father who loves basketball, I know J was so excited to have a boy who would hopefully share his love of chasing an orange ball around a court. And whilst Harry certainly does, we hadn’t quite nailed the as important aspect of basketball fandom that is being a verbose and passionate armchair game day critic.

Harry’s device didn’t have all the appropriate basketball terminology that was also quick and easy to speak, to keep up with a fast paced game...

And once you did create and speak a message, you then had to clear it before creating the next one or risk creating a long-winded disconnected rant along the lines of “yes no no go referee foul nice one no good shot no yes go bucks he’s on fire”.

... **Enter, the Sports Chat* page.** J created a pop up page off the sports folder on H’s device filled with basketball and generic sports chat, and with an important programming feature – when you press a button, the device immediately speaks the message pre-programmed to that button, but doesn’t put the message into the message window. It also keeps the Sports Chat window open instead of automatically closing after you select a button. This means that you can continually fire off messages without having to go in and out of the window and clearing each message from the message window as you go.



This has literally changed the game (*pun intended*) for both J and H. Now they can both shout at the TV at the appropriate time with the appropriate message without slowing down the action – it’s such a special (and not too quiet) thing to watch

Harry’s delight at being able to easily join in with his dad and yell at the TV is evident from his ear to ear beam whilst the simple joy of watching a game with his boy and sharing in some game day banter is making Jamie’s eyes leak.

PROCESS BEFORE:

1. Open Sports Chat
2. Select button “that’s a three”
3. Press message window to speak “that’s a three”
4. Clear message
5. Select button “come on ref”
6. Press message window to speak “come on ref”
7. And so on and on...

Not an ideal set up for sports banter when 7ft guys are bolting across a court in 3 steps

ENTER NEWLY PROGRAMMED SPORTS CHAT:

1. Open Sports Chat
2. Select and speak button “that’s a three”
3. Select and speak button “come on ref”



Sometimes the simplest little changes can make such a big difference. Having quick, easy pre-programmed messages ensures that H is part of the action right at the time that the action is happening.

Oh and for anyone who has no idea what “hit him with the Euro step” means, I’m afraid I can’t help you...

... **but here** is an image of some sort of interpretive dance that was apparently explaining it...

And as the games continue, more quick fire messages are being added, so as I hear the crowd shouting “DEEEFENSE” I ask Jamie if he had added that yet...

JAMIE “We don’t cheer for defence!”

Cue hearty cackling from H and J that barely conceals a conspiratorial eye roll.

Alright boys, I get it, I’ll stay out of the basketball banter!

**The programming set up of this Sports Chat page would work just as well for any sport, play or spectator activity where you’re likely to say the same things over and over again as quick fire messages. From ballet to basketball to bocchia, let the banter begin!*

ARTIST, WRITER, MENTOR AND ATHLETE

BY NATHAN LANGDOWN

Nathan is an active member and mentor for a group of 7 people who use AAC. Nathan shares his life journey with us and gives us some tips on how to be happy. Nathan has used a combination of speech and typing to share his story. Group facilitator (Kate Miller) from CPL in Queensland describes Nathan as ‘an amazing mentor to younger group members’.

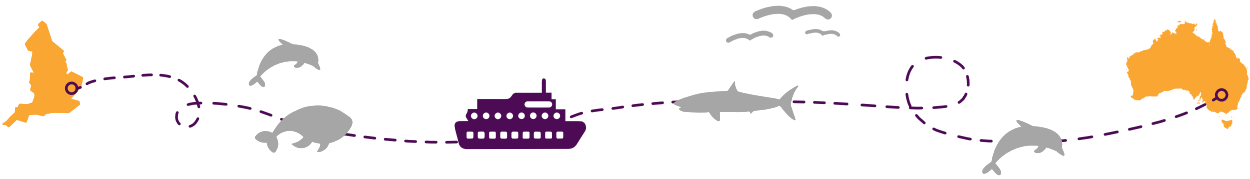
My name is Nathan Langdown. I am 59 years old and live in supported accommodation in Rothwell with my housemates, Robert Oakman and Dan Swart. I am an artist, writer and athlete. I have proudly represented Queensland in the State Boccia Championships.

Here is a story about my life. I hope you enjoy it.



IN THE BEGINNING

I was born in England in 1958. When I was nine years old I travelled to Australia on the Oriana cruise ship with my mum, dad and eight siblings. There is a replica in the Queensland Maritime Museum, I like going to see the replica. The Oriana was a very big ship. The trip from England to Australia took six weeks. The journey felt like a long time. We passed land along the way which made the trip interesting. I could see sharks and whales in the deep ocean and birds flying overhead as well.



There were activities for kids like board games. I played the games with my family and other girls and boys. I read books that were in the ship’s library. I liked visiting the library because the librarians helped me to choose books. I also finished lots of jigsaw puzzles, as my hands were more dexterous then. I wore callipers on both legs back then. I could walk to the library and around the ship myself. I did not get seasick. I was excited and nervous about going to a completely new country. I knew nothing about Australia.

On the ship I had good a time meeting lots of adults and other girls and boys. I have always liked meeting new people because it is interesting to make new friends. I still like meeting new people which is just as well as I have met hundreds of people who provide support for me as I live with a disability.

I was born with cerebral palsy. It affects my legs, hands and, to a lesser degree, my speech. I was once able to walk but now I use a mobility device that I can drive myself. I prefer this because I want to be independent.

FIRST STEPS IN AUSTRALIA

When we arrived in Australia, we moved into a flat in Collingwood. It was a high-rise apartment. We were on the fifth floor. It had a lift. I could see other buildings from the window.



I remember I started to barrack for Carlton Football Club in the Australian Rules code. Victorians love their football. My team's colours are blue and white. They are called the Blues. I used to go and see them play. I loved watching my team play.

I started attending the Yooralla School for Children who lived with cerebral palsy when I was in grade two. This was in Balwyn in Melbourne, Victoria. I was picked up from my house by a school bus with other kids. I liked the trip on the school bus. I sat in the middle of the bus. The bus driver was friendly. My memories of Yooralla are positive. Auntie Pauline was my teacher at the school and also became my foster mother at home.

We moved in with my Auntie Pauline in Brighton. She lived alone and never married. I remember she was a kind person. One of my favourite memories from my time with Auntie Pauline was when we would go dancing at the Collingwood town hall every Saturday night. I danced in calipers. The big brass band played current music. We danced until dark and would not leave until very late at night. I remember driving home in Auntie Pauline's Cortina.



Auntie Pauline was a teacher at the school I went to. She taught me to read and write around the kitchen table. I enjoyed my time there and had many friends.

Before I was 20, I was able to walk around for hours. I was able to walk around the street at home and catch buses and trams. Being able to walk gave me a lot more independence and made me feel fantastic.

MY FAMILY

I would like to tell you a little bit more about my family. One of the most important relationships in my life was with my foster mum, Rosemary. My mother was born in Wales and she was a quiet woman. I remember my mum was a very loyal mum. Mum had her hands full bringing up myself and my eight siblings. However, she still made sure she had time for all of us. I remember when I visited her in the aged care place she lived, we would have cups of tea and watch the Bold and the Beautiful. We always loved to gossip about the show and my mum especially loved the fashion.

Another important relationship was with my dad. When I was growing up my dad worked a lot so he was very busy and did not have a lot of time to spend with me. As I got older we became a lot closer. We both enjoy watching car racing and this is a hobby we are able to share. My sister, Tina, is also an important person to me. We both share a love for country music. My brother Byn works in computers. I have fond memories of going fishing with my brother when we were kids.

MOVING TO QUEENSLAND

After my childhood growing up in Brighton, Victoria, the family moved to Queensland. When I was twenty my mother moved into an aged care facility as she was unable to care for me. Dad found a place at Sunnymead and I moved into this facility in Caboolture. Sunnymead was owned by the same family for forty five years. The facility had mainly elderly people living there and I was the only young person with a disability. My time there was terrible. I was sad and bored because there was nothing to do. People died next to me a lot. I thought I would die in that place. I remember always being cold as the staff would never give me any extra blankets and there was no heater.



It was here that I broke my hip and I had to start using a wheelchair. This made me feel even more trapped because my independence was taken away.

Luckily one day a woman whose father was in the bed next to me saw what awful conditions I was living in. They contacted Ruby from CPL who helped to get me out of that place. I was introduced to a whole new world outside of Sunnymead.



CPL set me up in a group home in Burpengary with a man named Chris. We looked after the horses for the Riding for the Disabled Association there. I had a happy time there.

It was at this time that I was introduced to CPL's Cascade place in Redcliffe. **This was an amazing time in my life because the staff at the centre helped me to express myself through different hobbies. I have made a lot of lifelong friends at Cascade Place.**

A NEW LEASE OF LIFE

It's at Cascade Place that I have been able to become more involved in many different hobbies.

- **The first hobby I enjoy is art.** I have been able to create many different pieces of work and one of my big projects even went on display in Canberra and was on TV on the ABC.
- **Boccia is another of my passions** and I am able to play with my good friend and roommate, Rob Oakman. I even had the opportunity to compete in the state championships in Sydney. Boccia allowed me to build my confidence and assertiveness. I have always struggled with confidence I think this is due to some tough experiences I have had growing up so Boccia has been a very positive hobby for me.
- **Sailing is another hobby I enjoy.** I don't get sea sick while sailing and it is such a relief to be out of my chair. I feel weightless when I am out sailing and I sometimes get to see fish.
- **Another passion of mine is reading.** I enjoy listening to audio books any chance I get. My

favourite genre is crime because they always keep me wanting more and I never want to stop listening to them! I like finding out whodunnit!

- **I also love writing.** I have been writing my life story for a couple of years. I like using my literacy skills and hearing my thoughts read back to me. I type my story onto a laptop.

ALI

I would like to share a little bit about a very important relationship in my life, which is with my girlfriend, Ali. Ali is thirty five years old. She likes to play ten pin bowling. She also likes to draw and play computer games. Every month we go out for dinner together just the two of us. The dinners we have together are fantastic.

We shared a carer and that is how we met. I'm lucky she introduced us. We've been going out for about five years. Ali is very fun-loving and has a cheeky laugh. She is also writing her life story so it is nice that we are both able to share that hobby. I like holding her hand, and we even kissed once. That was a lot of fun. She lives in her own place in Kallangur. I would love if one day I was able to share a house with Ali so we could spend more time together.

MY CAR ACCIDENT



In June 2016 I was involved in a nasty car crash.

Our support worker, Hana, was driving the bus with Robert, Beverly and myself in the back. We were going over to Strathpine to visit the art group. We were driving through an intersection and a driver failed to stop his car. He crashed into the side of us and threw us all around. Everyone else's injuries were not so bad. I came out of it the worst. I broke my sacrum. It made it very painful to use my hoist or to sit down because of where the break was. It was very sore and I had to have lots of medication for the pain. It took about two months to heal up and I had to have a lot of bed rest. I am feeling a lot better now and am thankful that it wasn't worse.



DARK MOFO ACCESS PROGRAM 2019

Image Courtesy Dark Mofo, Hobart, Tasmania, Australia

DARK MOFO ACCESS PROGRAM

BY TRACEY HANIGAN

It may be winter in Hobart, but locals and visitors are coming out of hibernation and enjoying the Dark Mofo festival. Recently voted Australia's 'best special event', Dark Mofo runs over 3 weeks in June and is a celebration of all things winter in Hobart, Tasmania.

Some highlights of the festival include:

- the Dark Mofo + City of Hobart Winter Feast, on Hobart's docks, where you can sit around an open fire and enjoy the best food and beverage offerings from across Tasmania.
- Viewing of the Ogoh-Ogoh Purging. This year's hand crafted monster is a giant totem-like swift parrot, a critically endangered species of parrot that migrates to Tasmania every year. The Ogoh-Ogoh is based on a Balinese Hindu purification ritual where you can write down your greatest fears and place them into the heart of the Ogoh-Ogoh. There will be a procession of the Ogoh-Ogoh the night after the winter solstice, culminating in the burning of the monster and the collective fears of Hobart.



WHAT IF YOU ARE A PERSON WHO HAS A DISABILITY?

Most of the festival events are held after dark, where moving around on uneven surfaces can be difficult. For those with sensory sensitivities, there are big crowds and many of the art installations around the city can emit loud and unexpected noises.

To cater for the needs of people who might find it difficult to access the festival, Dark Mofo organisers have developed a fabulous Access Program.

Participants who took part in the program had the opportunity to tour the Winter Feast and view the Ogoh-Ogoh before it was open to the public. These events were supported by staff from Young Leaders of Tasmania volunteers and Southern Support School, who provided activity displays to support the interactions with participants. Many participants brought their AAC systems with them as well and were able to chat about the Dark Mofo events.

These events were enjoyed by all who attended.

We look forward to joining in again next year and already have lots of great ideas on how to make the access events even better.





The boys enjoyed every part they experienced and to see the smiles on their faces was the best gift to us.

Great time had by all of us and definitely be back next year.

WHAT THE FAMILIES HAD TO SAY:

Well feast was great, hard to decide what to eat, spoiled for choice. The early entry was a huge advantage, I was able to walk around and describe the food offerings to Ryan who then made a choice. It was so much easier to do so without a crowd. We definitely enjoyed it and I hope that the organisers will continue to offer special access in the future.

Had a wonderful time, so much better than last year and was great to have the reserved eating space, felt very special!

We had a fantastic time at Dark MOFO's Access Program. Our boys attended Winter Feast, Ogoh-ogoh Purging and Dark Path.

Just the chance to go as a family meant the world to us. We normally have to do things one on one or not at all.

All of the assistants were so friendly and made us feel welcome.



Photo Credit Dark Mofo/Jesse Hunniford, 2019 Image Courtesy Dark Mofo, Hobart, Tasmania, Australia

HARD CORE YARD CORE

BY KRISTINE WITKOWSKI



The following guest post was taken from the blog Special Crafts for Special Kids (also known as AAC Family Fun on Facebook). AGOSCI loves finding families who are making AAC a part of their everyday world and sharing their tips whenever they can. Jump online and check out Kristine and her family's adventures

ABOUT THE WITKOWSKIS

We have been an AAC family for over three years - our daughter uses a Novachat 10 and TouchChat with WordPower. For the last two years I have been sharing some of my DIY - AAC crafts in various places which have now grown to two blogs, a YouTube channel, and a Zazzle store! I have also created the Facebook page to have a central sharing spot for these ideas and creations.

➔ www.specialcraftsforspecialkids.wordpress.com/

f www.facebook.com/AACFamilyFun/

SPECIAL CRAFTS FOR SPECIAL KIDS BLOG

HARD CORE YARD CORE

MAY 26 2019

We try to always have some version of AAC close at hand. We are usually very good about making sure not to leave home without my daughter's talker or some version of low tech AAC for her to communicate – whether it be a coreboard on a lanyard, or an apron with core and fringe vocab, AAC kickboards for the pool, etc. Where we are perhaps not as good at always remembering is when we are outside in the yard at home.

A few years ago I saw the idea of having a coreboard printed on a yard sign on one of the various AAC facebook groups that I follow. These signs are printed on similar material to the ones the politicians use when campaigning. I immediately had one printed up at Office Depot (American/ U.S. equivalent of Office Works) and we have been using it in the classroom for our homeschool enrichment program ever since. This year I got the idea to have a new one made and actually use it outside – it is weather resistant and a “yard sign” after all so why not use it in the backyard?

I decided to have the sign made up two-sided. With the first side containing the 96 position coreboard based on the WordPower 60 that we use with my daughter's NovaChat and TouchChat devices. We have printed out this coreboard from Saltillo and have it everywhere in our house as you can see in my previous blog posts. On the second side I



HOW TO MAKE THE SIGN

- Create one or more .jpg images of the right dimensions to be printed on a yard sign at OfficeWorks (they call them Coreflute Signs) or another online printing store. See below for more detail on this step.

- Go to their website and upload your image(s) selecting the option to "Upload your own design".

Follow their directions and pay for the sign
Prices at Office Works vary from \$65-79

TIPS ON MAKING THE SIGN

- I created my .jpgs in my scrapbooking software to make sure that I had the right dimensions. If you don't have scrapbooking software you can probably use PowerPoint to do this as well since the Standard size for a PowerPoint slide is 4:3 (newer versions of Office may offer Widescreen slides as well – but it will still have the 4:3 standard format as an option). You can use this standard size to create the image for your sign and then save your slide as a .jpg that can be uploaded to the OfficeWorks website.

- To get the coreboards etc. I used the following:

- For the main coreboards I copied the poster .jpg from the Saltillo website's page of low tech options. I actually used the poster for WordPower60 without categories.

- I then used Chat Editor on my PC to customize pages in my daughter's vocabulary for "play in the backyard", and "nature in the backyard"

- One by one for these new pages (as well as her QWERTY page and first descriptions page) I would navigate to the page in Chat Editor on my PC then do a screenshot (Function+Print Screen) then pasted the screenshot into my scrapbook software (or PowerPoint) and cropped the image down to the page of buttons. I did this for each of the the pages I wanted to include with the coreboard.

- Since I had a few open spaces on the original coreboard (since it didn't include the categories) I decided to use those spaces for our family members, neighbors, friends, and people. I used the Chat Editor Capture feature to copy and paste those specific buttons on to the sign image as well.

- Once I had everything where I wanted it I saved my image as a .jpg to be uploaded to the Office Works website.



wanted to include not only the main coreboard but additional words that we might want to have handy for our various backyard activities: people, games and toys that we might play with, locations objects and animals we might see, and descriptions we might want to use as well as a QWERTY page. These were all screens or buttons that exist or were created in my daughter's devices via Chat Editor.

I liked the idea of having a simple side in case there ended up being too much on the side with fringe words included. I think it turned out really well – The first day we had the sign up we used it to play with our daughter. We were acting like a train and following her directions on the sign every time looped back to it "go fast", "go slow", "go funny", "go cool" were some of the things she told us to do. She also told us who should be a train together "Mom Dad", "Maria Grace" and then "4" when she wanted all four of us to go together. I am really excited about all the opportunities we have to play with this this summer!

CLICK TIPS FROM THE EDITOR

Within this section of AGOSCI in Focus I aim to share online links which may provide you with inspiration, motivation and opportunities to learn more about AAC, assistive technology, communication and more. If you have any favourite links you would like to see featured within the next magazine please contact me (contact details available in the front of this edition). Happy clicking – Jess

FACEBOOK

AAC FAMILY FUN

This Facebook page provides some lovely ideas for making AAC accessible in a range of formats, environments and settings. Written by Kristine Kupiecki Witkowski, a mum of a young lady who has started using AAC in the last three years. Her posts often include great instructions on how you could replicate some of her ideas. This family are based in the United States and the information is presented in a clear and jargon-free manner.

 www.facebook.com/AACFamilyFun/

WE SPEAK PODD

This is a very popular Facebook, Instagram and YouTube page. Many may already be aware of this one. We Speak PODD follows the Owen's family journey to authentic communication for their adopted children. All of their adopted children (4) have complex medical, positioning and communication needs. Karen Owen (Mum) started posting videos and Facebook posts approximately 3 years ago. They have experienced a significant loss during this time but continue to post and share their journey when they can. There are 100s of videos available online and the progress they are making is amazing to watch.

#homeschooling, #PODD, #alternateaccess, #healing, #hope, #fullimmersion Trigger warnings: child loss, associated PTSD

 www.facebook.com/wespeakpodd/

GIVE THE BOY A CHANCE

This Facebook page and blog provides a beautiful, raw and insightful glimpse in to the world of Harry (a person who uses AAC) and his family. His Mum (Michaela) shares successes, obstacles and snap shots of the life of a family who uses AAC. This blog has been created a number of years ago. Scrolling through older posts, allows the reader to see how Harry's language and communication skills have bloomed.

 www.facebook.com/givetheboyachance

 <https://givetheboyachance.wordpress.com/>

WEBSITES

PRACTICAL AAC

PrAACtical AAC supports a community of professionals and families who are determined to improve the communication and literacy abilities of people with significant communication difficulties. It was founded in 2011 by two SLP professors, Carole Zangari and the late Robin Parker, around a shared passion for AAC." You can also follow them on other social media platforms including (YouTube, Instagram, Twitter, Pinterest). Loads of information to sink your teeth into here.

 <https://practicalaac.org/>



Companies who are developing

FREE AND USER-FRIENDLY RESOURCES

As families and professionals are utilising ready-made online learning resources more and more, companies and organisations are starting to catch on. This is great news for our AAC community as it means that we are not required to 'reinvent the wheel'. Please note there are many companies and organisations who are creating resources; this initial list contains but a few. Each company's resources usually contain some symbols that are specific to the products they sell. Despite this, the resources can usually be applied to most devices, page sets and symbol types.

Please note: AGOSCI has not been paid for these recommendations.

SALTILLO

➔ <https://saltillo.com/chatcorner>

For those who are looking for ideas for teaching simple core words, check out the "Let's teach core"

➔ <https://saltillo.com/chatcorner/content/34>

ASSISTIVWARE CORE WORD CLASSROOM

This website mainly shares resources about teaching core words. All resources are free.

➔ <https://www.assistiveware.com/blog/assistiveware-core-word-classroom>

GO BOARDMAKER

Scroll through the following link to get to the \$0 items. Following the links to the check out, you will see you are not required to pay for these items. You could then use the same concepts to make your own activities.

➔ <https://goboardmaker.com/collections/all>





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Keep up to date with information from and about national seminars, workshops, research, new communication technology, resources in the AAC field, news from overseas, and contributions from people who use AAC.

-  www.facebook.com/AGOSCI
-  www.agosci.org.au
-  <https://twitter.com/agosci>

JOIN US ON FACEBOOK

AGOSCI MEMBERS FORUM

AGOSCI members forum is a group established as a platform for AGOSCI members to foster member discussion and idea sharing.

-  www.facebook.com/groups/agosci.forum

AGOSCI PARENT SUPPORT GROUP

AGOSCI has created this group to give family members and carers of AAC users the opportunity to share information, stories, ask questions and support each other in a safe, non-judgemental environment.

-  www.facebook.com/groups/1689310747981459/

AGOSCI WEBINAR SERIES

The AGOSCI webinar series is designed to promote skills and knowledge about AAC across all sectors of the Australian community. All webinars are free to attend for AGOSCI members only.

➔ www.agosci.org.au

To attend a future webinar, please log-in to your AGOSCI account and proceed to the members only page to register.

To view past webinars, please log-in to your AGOSCI account and proceed to the members only section to view recordings. Past webinars are online within 48 hours of the view date. Our past webinars include:



What is AAC, and what does it look like?

Presented by Janelle Sampson

Towards Cohesive Language Development in AAC

Presented by Cathy Binger

Being Part of the AAAction

Presented by Fiona Given

How I Became an AAC Communicator

Presented by Nick Bradbury

Championing Communication Access for All

Presented by Barbara Solarsh and Georgia Burn (from Scope)

AAC and the NDIS - Surfing the Waves of Change

Presented by Gail Bennell

Achieving Functional Communication

Through Minspeak Presented by Siobhan Daley

Assessment and AAC - Where do we start? What am I looking for?

Presented by Janelle Sampson

Communication assistants: What strategies do they use in conversation with people who have Down syndrome, Rett syndrome or Cerebral Palsy? *Presented by Dr Jane Remington-Gurney*

What's in a Voice? An overview of message banking and voice banking

Presented by Peta Booth, Speech Pathologist from LifeTec Australia

Understanding Parent Rejection and Abandonment of AAC Systems

Presented by Alison Moorcroft

Using AAC to give evidence in court and tribunal hearings

Presented by Fiona Given

Implementing music therapy and AAC in a lower resourced set

Presented by Kylie Hinde and Farhin Chowdhury

Championing Communication Access for All

Presented by Barbara Solarsh and Georgia Burn (from Scope)

Online therapy: making the most of technology to support AAC users and people with complex communication needs.

Presented by Edward Johnson

Finding your way with AAC AT provision in the NDIS: A joint collaboration between AGOSCI and Speech Pathology Australia

Presented by Cathy Olsson and Jessica Moll

Supporting Adults with Profound and Multiple Disabilities

Presented by Dr Sheridan Forster

AAC and Literacy

Presented by Ash Harling

ALTERNATIVE PENCILS

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Alternative pencils, occupational therapy and independent writing in a special school

“...but they are only tools”¹

The role of occupational therapy (OT) in writing via handwriting is well established. Yet, by extension of this historical involvement in written expression – many Queensland Department of Education (DoE) OTs are now being involved in supporting teachers to choose an alternative pencil (AP) for students within special schools.

In 2016, Nursery Road State Special School (NRSSS) identified that supporting decision making around AP selection may lead to improved teacher and student writing practices. The initial goal of the AP project was to develop a basic tool to aid teachers in choosing an appropriate AP as well as improving collaborative practices between OTs and teaching staff, with the outcome being:

“For NRSSS students to express themselves through text in a way that is meaningful to them”

By no means was it an easy journey, nor is it over. This article aims to explore the path taken by NRSSS and key lessons learnt along the way.

Key message #1: APs are one small part of writing, which is one small part of literacy

Koppenhaver, Coleman, Kalman & Yoder (1991)² proposed that reading, writing, speaking and listening develop concurrently for students with significant disabilities (Figure 1). By extension, literacy cannot be taught by learning skills in isolation – students need a comprehensive approach to literacy instruction³.

Hanser (2010)⁴ outlines that writing skills development will occur if students are provided with multiple meaningful opportunities to learn what print is for and interact with writing in a way that is accessible to them.

The main purpose of using an AP is to improve access to writing by providing all 26 letters of the alphabet, while *reducing the motor demands* so that the student has more capacity to focus on the cognitive, linguistic and communicative aspects of writing⁵. Students do not need to be able to read or spell words in order to use APs⁶.

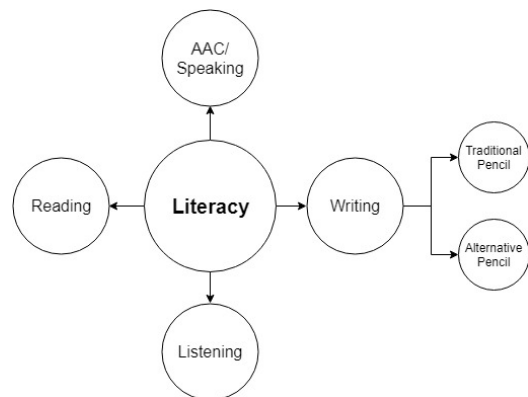


Figure 1: Adapted from Koppenhaver et al, 1991. Adapted from Teale and Sulzby, 1989



Figure 2: Choose the AP with the lowest motor demands

Students with significant learning or physical needs already miss key literacy learning opportunities in early life compared with typically developing peers⁴. APs provide our students with an accessible way to explore the alphabet, in an effort to simulate the many hours that typical kids have with drawing and writing with a pencil⁶.

For emergent writers, the purpose of writing instruction is for the student to learn how to construct meaning through composing text. Writing is NOT copying or tracing tasks – these are fine motor tasks that do not teach the purpose and concepts of writing i.e. print has meaning, *why* people write, what it means to be a writer and how to think like a writer⁷. We do not wait for a student's handwriting to get better – using an alternative method of writing should not be a last resort. Focusing on forming letters (handwriting) can detract from time and effort spent on learning about what writing is for and why you write⁸.

Many DoE OTs are being asked to assist teachers in the selection of APs for large cohorts of students, however, exploring AP selection without the integration of writing as part of a comprehensive literacy approach will ultimately influence the success or failure of the chosen AP.

Using APs for 'independent writing' as part of a comprehensive literacy instruction approach will provide our students with the much needed opportunities to understand the functions of print, alphabetic principles, phonological and alphabet awareness and a broad range of receptive and expressive language skills⁹.

AP use will be most successful if there is a whole school approach to comprehensive literacy instruction.

Key message #2: Students can communicate without writing, but can't write without a way to communicate

During the early AP project case studies, it became apparent very quickly that if a student did not have a communication method – it was very hard to establish meaning about their writing. Whilst using a set of pictures for the student to choose from can enable a 'choice' about writing, it still relies on the adults' interpretation of that choice's meaning – did the student really want 'bird' or did they have something else to say? What if none of the pictures is motivating for the student and that is all they are presented with?

It makes sense that if a student does not have a means to communicate – then it is near impossible to know what they really want to write about. The AP project free writing process underwent a number of changes over the life of the project, culminating in the version outlined in Figure 3 – where the importance of robust communication is reinforced at all points.



Figure 3: Free writing at NRSSS

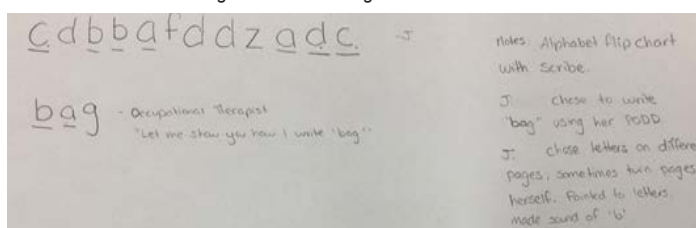


Figure 4: Free writing using PODD and alphabet flipchart

There may still be students that do not have a robust communication method – and whilst this should be explored with urgency, these students can still participate in the free writing process – adults can still use environmental cues to assign meaning to their writing and the writing interaction can be an opportunity to model alternative and augmentative communication (AAC).

A robust communication method influences a student's writing with an AP.

Key message #3: Students (and teachers) need to be supported to learn how to write with an AP

In the same way that providing a student with AAC will not instantaneously improve their communicative output, neither will a standalone AP result in an increase in quality or amount of written output or engagement in the writing process. Both students and teaching staff need to be supported to learn how to write using an AP.

Education staff

During the AP project, a significant portion of the project time was dedicated to building capability of not only teachers – but also teacher aides – who are often the ones carrying out the writing with many of the students. A variety of types of training or resources were provided during different phases of the project including:

- Group teacher training: background information on APs and [AP Choice Making Guide](#).
- Group teacher aide training: hands on AP free writing session.
- Small cohorts of new teachers or teacher aides training using Dynamic Learning Maps group online webinar: “[Writing with Alternate Pencils](#)”
- Development of [Alternative Pencil Project edStudio](#) with background information and printable resources.
- Development and implementation of case study protocol:
 - Teachers informed of selection to participate and provided with [information pack](#) about case study process.
 - Teachers choose target student for case study and liaise with OT to negotiate time to conduct ‘independent writing’ interaction. Teacher rates self-confidence to problem solve, consult and implement APs.
 - OT video records ‘free writing’ interaction. Teacher scores student writing using Developmental Writing Scale (Sturm et al, 2012) and self-scores free writing interaction using CLDS-UNC [Emergent Writing Observation Inventory](#). OT uses a coaching style to work with teacher to develop goals for writing interaction. OT supports teacher to develop [AP profile](#) for target student.
 - Teacher and OT meet to use AP Choice Making Guide to determine AP for target student. Self-confidence questionnaire, video recording of free writing and scoring (as above) is repeated following 10+ weeks of regular use of chosen AP.
 - Teacher uses information and resources provided to develop AP profiles for remaining students.

Students

There appears to be a small pool of authors who consistently describe using APs during writing within a Four Blocks or Balanced Literacy approach – and while no specific ‘writing protocol’ has been outlined, a number of guiding principles influence what ‘free writing’ now looks like at NRSSS (see Figure 3, above). Hanser^{6,8} has written two documents that provide more in depth guidance on instructional practices for using APs with emergent writers.

Students (and teachers) need to be supported to learn how to write with an AP.

Key message #4: Students (and teachers) need a reason to write

Hanser^{1,4,5,8} consistently reinforces the importance of writing as an ‘interaction’ and the need to use motivating methods to engage students in the process of writing. This aligns with Nystrand’s (1989)¹⁰ model of social interactive model of writing (Figure 5) and Deci & Ryans’ (1985)¹¹ self-determination theory (SDT). The SDT theory proposes the relationship between:

- Autonomy: ‘I have choices’
- Relatedness: ‘I am connected to others’
- Competence: ‘I can do things’

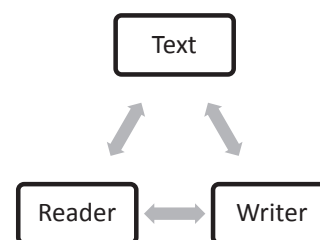


Figure 5: Nystrand, 1989

This theory can provide a simplified way to view any learning activity where difficulties with engagement and motivation have been identified. Many aspects of the AP project aimed to support teachers and students’ autonomy, relatedness and competence.

| | Teachers | Students |
|--------------------|---|--|
| Autonomy | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Choice of target student for AP project. Chooses AP with advice from OT. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Motivating topics Choice of writing topics |
| Relatedness | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collaboratively problem solve writing process and AP choice with OT. Connection of AP choice and data collection to teacher assessment reporting. Connection of AP case study process to greater school priorities. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Writing as a positive interaction with reader (adult) Writing for real reasons Celebration of students writing. |
| Competence | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Building capability through training packages, resource creation, and coaching framework for AP choice making. Using the Developmental Writing Scale (DWS)¹² to measure change and plan literacy teaching focus. Using video reflections to take the time to review own practice, set goals and see smaller changes over time. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> AP with lowest motor demand. Observing AP modelling every day. Completing free writing daily. Writing without standards (correct writing is modelled <i>after</i> the student has completed their writing). |

Teachers and teacher aides were encouraged to use motivating topics wherever possible during free writing activities e.g. photos of the student completing an activity. Where the topic was related to a particular lesson plan – adults would provide the student with a choice of pictures or topics to write about related to that topic. If the student was able and motivated to draw a picture about the topic e.g. the book of the week, they could then write about what they had drawn.

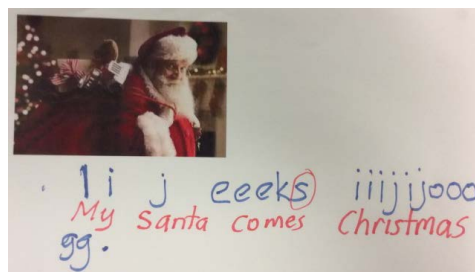


Figure 6: Student chose from three motivating pictures, using separate high contrast PODD alphabet + PODD

The OTs reported that the *biggest facilitator of practice change* was that the AP project allowed teachers the time to reflect on their practice – and that the video recording and self-scoring using the CLDS-UNC Emergent Writing Observation Inventory helped facilitate this process. Whilst it initially could feel awkward for both the OT and the teacher during the recording process – it was worth it for the insights that both the OT and teacher could see when they could slow down these moments. Often, the student was far more engaged than the teacher would realise – and this was incredibly rewarding to see teachers realise they were in fact doing a great job!

It is important to note that some students may never progress beyond a specific level on the DWS – and this is okay. It is our job as educators to ensure that we are measuring the things that count for students, which in this instance may be the students' engagement in the writing process and with their writing partners. The skills developed through the writing interactions may support progression in other aspects of that students' literacy journey – engagement is important and should not be undersold. NRSSS continues in its journey to figure out the magic method for measuring the seemingly intangible concept of engagement in learning!

Motivation and engagement is essential and IMPORTANT for all aspects of learning, including writing with an AP – for students (and teachers).

Key message #5: Creating sustainable change takes time

SLPs are well aware of the length of time and effort it takes for a student to be able to communicate and understand communication using AAC – and APs are no different. The NRSSS AP project pre- and post-assessments fluctuated from six weeks to one term – and sometimes this was not enough time to see change in student writing. However, as noted above, important changes occurred in teacher self-

confidence and practice behaviour.

Seeing change in a students' engagement in AP use will occur when:

- The teacher feels confident to use the students AP.
- Models the AP regularly.
- There is positive relationship between student and adult to facilitate a positive writing interaction.
- Motivating topics or choice of topics.
- Writing for real reasons.
- Writing without standards (no red pen!).

For students who are not progressing on the DWS, recording contextual notes on the students' writing sample will provide evidence of small changes. Contextual notes can include the students' communication about what that they wanted to write about (which may develop, even if their letter strings don't) as well as how engaged they were in the process. The CLDS-UNC Emergent Writing Observation Inventory provides a structured method to measure teacher practice change as well as student engagement.

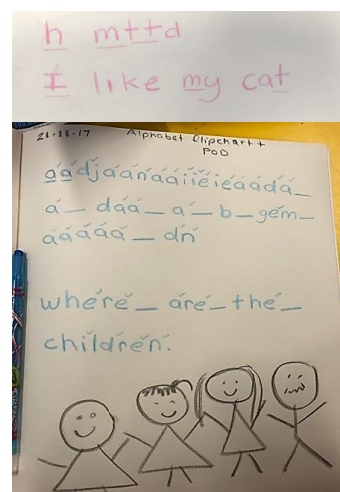


Figure 7: Writing became students' favourite activity

Additionally, there will always be new staff and new teachers who need to learn about APs within the schools' comprehensive literacy approach. Embedding a plan to provide training to new staff will promote sustained effective use of APs during their long school journey.

Give students (and teachers) time to choose and implement APs and plan training for new staff.

Key message #6: Choose the AP for today, AP for tomorrow

The very first teacher I interviewed for the AP project described a particular students' two APs – a wireless keyboard connected to the smartboard, and a flip chart. She noted how 'Lily' loved the wireless keyboard, choosing a picture from Google, and 'bashing away at the keys', enjoying the dings galore. However, the teacher knew this wasn't her long term independent writing option, at this stage for her to connect meaning to print, she needed the more structured, broken down flip chart.

During some teacher conversations, it has been hard for some to understand the purpose of students creating seemingly random letter strings. As noted above, some students may not progress past this stage – and this is okay – however, some might and they have a basic human right to be given the opportunity to learn how to do so. Basic letter sound correspondence could translate to the 'gist' of a spelling that could enable them to communicate using the alphabet in the back of their Pragmatic Organisation Dynamic Display (PODD) AAC. Another student may start with a printable QWERTY layout – which progresses to typing 'pnk' into YouTube to get their favourite artist to play music. As our technologically advancing world progresses – a spelling prediction software could mean our students could fill in online forms independently – and so they should!

Connect to the long view of literacy learning in school – what do you want your students to be able to take with them when they leave?

Summary

APs aim to provide emergent learners with an accessible means to learn and participate in written expression...but they are only tools. An AP can facilitate the access and participation of our students in one aspect of their literacy journey which will lead them to their life beyond school – what more could a DoE OT want?

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Resources

Dynamic Learning Maps Professional Development ‘Writing with Alternate Pencils’:
<https://www.dlmpd.com/writing-with-alternate-pencils/>

NRSSS Alternative Pencil Project edStudio:
<https://staff.learningplace.eq.edu.au/lp/pages/default.aspx?cid=214794>

AP Project Teacher Information Pack Resources:
<https://staff.learningplace.eq.edu.au/lp/pages/default.aspx?pid=1996149>

AP Profile – example:
<https://staff.learningplace.eq.edu.au/GenericMediaHandler.axd?id=487910a0-cd9e-4b5d-9d2f-237b276fd7b3&mediatype=Generic&download=true>

University of North Carolina - Centre for Literacy and Disability Studies – Emergent Writing Observation Inventory:
<https://www.med.unc.edu/ahs/clds/resources/deaf-blind-model-classroom-resources/Emerg%20Wrtg%20Obs%20Inventory.pdf/view>



NOTES

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Liberator offers mobile Speech Pathology services in Sydney & Perth, to support people of all ages to become more skilled communicators using AAC. Speech Pathologists at Liberator are interested in and have a background in AAC, with skills & knowledge in the use of the full Liberator device range. We are trained to provide LAMP therapy and are able to support different access techniques such as direct touch, switching, head pointing or eye gaze.

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