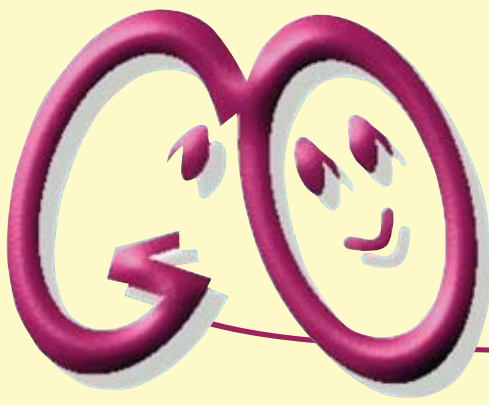


November 2007
Volume 26 Issue 2



AGOSCI

in focus



This issue ...

**Autism Spectrum Disorders and
Alternative and Augmentative Communication:
ASD and AAC**

What's New?

Spectronics

Inclusive Learning Technologies®

DECEMBER 2007



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New! M3 from DynaVox!

The M3 is the latest in the digitized device range from DynaVox and will replace the popular MiniMo and MightyMo.

The M3 includes elements of the InterAACT page sets – and of course you will be able to create your own page sets as well. It will also include fast single word and phrase prediction, allowing the user to construct sentences from digitized recordings quickly and simply. Page creation has been simplified and Picture Communication Symbols (PCS) are included on each device.

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For more information visit the Spectronics website at www.spectronicsinoz.com/product.asp?product=26273 or feel free to contact Jane Farrall or Katie Lyon by email or at Spectronics' Melbourne office on phone (03) 9848 4812.



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1. Three excellent Keynote Speakers!

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What? Wasn't Caroline Musselwhite presenting too? Yes she was, but will now be unable to attend. She has promised to be back bigger and better for the Inclusive Learning Technologies® Conference in 2010! Did you attend Pati's presentations during the AGOSCI National Tour in 2006? No problems! She will be presenting new and different material at our conference. Come along and learn more!

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Front cover

Jim Simpson, 25, lives in Darwin and has been painting for approximately 5 years. He uses rollers and brushes to create his paintings. Jim has cerebral palsy, communicates through signing and has a Bluebird communication aid.

Some of Jim's artwork has been exhibited at the Awakenings Arts Festival in Horsham, Victoria. In July 2007, Jim had his first solo exhibition at Art Space Gallery, run by Carpentaria Disability Services in Darwin. Manager of the gallery, Ken Scott, believes Jim's work shows an "amazing use of colour and light". Jim sold several paintings during the exhibition.

Jim says "I want to sell more paintings so I can pay for trips to Adelaide to see my family. I like to be independent and make my own decisions. The money from my paintings helps but I also want a job". "Cerebral palsy doesn't stop me from doing the things I want. I love music and being with people".



Photo courtesy of Northern Territory News

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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 and news from overseas.

AGOSCI *In Focus* is an ISAAC affiliated publication.

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editorial

Welcome to another packed edition of AGOSCI In Focus. The theme for this edition is Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) and Alternative and Augmentative Communication (AAC). This edition comes at a time when autism is a focus at both state and national levels. The Australian Advisory Board on Autism Spectrum Disorders has launched a National Call to Action appealing to national and state policy makers to ensure effective resourcing and structuring of future service delivery. Appropriate services in early education, school aged, and adult services are a focus. Central to all these services is communication; acknowledging that many people with autism have special needs in the area of communication and benefit from systems and strategies to augment or replace speech.

In this edition there are five ASD and AAC themed articles covering a broad range of issues. Paula Hartwig outlines the diagnosis process that she used in Wales. Rosie Crossley looks at the need to assume competency in assessment and calls for readers to attend to the physical access issues for people with ASD. The different ways that people with autism and severe intellectual disability communicate, and the need for partners to communicate in personally meaningful ways, is the focus of Mark Barber's article. Gill Greenwood outlines the multiple ways that Louise, a girl with Rett syndrome, communicates, from the perspective of the speech pathologist and Louise's mother. And Ylana Bloom, Dolly Bhargava, and Elizabeth Ponce, focus on the use of visual supports to enhance the social skills of people with autism.

As well as our regular sections, this edition features a camp roundup: inspiring and full of fun! And our first CAT (Critically Appraised Topic), focused on Makaton.

The theme for the next edition will be: Being a Good Communication Partner. We look forward to receiving research papers, literature reviews, surveys, personal accounts and creative and artistic submissions from people who use AAC, family members, and professionals. We'd like to know what you believe makes a good communication partner for someone who uses AAC.

- Parents of people who don't use or seem to understand speech: what are the special things about good communication partners in your child's life?
- Partners of people with a progressive neurological impairment: what modifications have you made to your own communication style to be a good communication partner?
- AAC users: when you use public transport, go to the shops or to work or school, what makes an everyday good communication partner?

Thank you to the editorial committee for their hard work throughout this issue. It has been a time of rich e-discussions concerning topics such as: what papers are suitable for AGOSCI-In Focus; should the AAC and the Arts section include artwork that explicitly reflects on being an AAC user or any art; and where does a person with autism who uses speech fit into the AAC field? It has been a pleasure discussing these issues with a group of people with experience, imagination, integrity, and a good sense of humour. The editorial committee needs more people on board, in particular, the Eastern lean needs to be counteracted by some people from SA, NT, and WA. Join us! We hope you find this edition of AGOSCI In Focus thought provoking, affirming, inspiring, challenging, and a credit to the great talent we have in Australia.

Sheridan Forster and Emily Armstrong

What is AGOSCI?

AGOSCI was established in 1981 by a group of professionals who saw the need to promote information exchange about severe communication impairment and related issues.

AGOSCI aims to lobby for the rights of people with complex communication needs, increase public awareness of complex communication needs, and to provide relevant educational and professional development events across Australia.

AGOSCI (formerly Australian Group for Severe Communication Impairment) is a voluntary and non-profit organisation.

What are the key areas of interest for AGOSCI?

AGOSCI's key area of interest is the implementation of augmentative and alternative communication, for example:

- Sign and gesture systems
- Lo- / Light-Tech communication options
- Voice output technology systems including speech generating devices and software
- Switching and mounting options for technology
- Mealtime issues related to disability
- Saliva control
- Current research
- Consumer advocacy and stories
- Literacy and AAC.

Who can join AGOSCI?

Anyone interested in complex communication needs can join AGOSCI. Our membership includes individuals experiencing complex communication needs, family and community members, teachers, speech pathologists, occupational therapists, rehabilitation engineers and other professionals.

What does AGOSCI offer?

AGOSCI membership offers:

- Twice-yearly AGOSCI *In Focus* magazine
- Discounted rates for AGOSCI events
- State / Territory study groups and meetings
- Access to the AGOSCI Listserve for on-line discussions
- Biennial National Conference
- AGOSCI website
- Consumer scholarships.

How do I join AGOSCI?

Simply download the membership form from <http://www.agosci.org.au> or contact your State representative (details listed over the page).



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Chairperson's Report

by Wendy Webster

2007 has seen the death of a master of communicating without speech. Marcel Marceau revitalised communication without speech as an art form as he dazzled many with his alter ego Bip without ever uttering a word. He stated "To communicate in silence is a link to the thoughts of man", "In silence and movement you can show the reflection of people." But his mime is not a conversation! It is not usually interactive.

In the world of those not able to express their own thoughts, opinions and life goals, silence can result in exploitation and lost potential. But Marceau also stated "There is never silence" "Words create images"; Bip was alone in a fragile world filled with injustice and beauty.

I feel AGOSCI serves to minimise the aloneness felt by those in the AAC extended community by creating an opportunity for information sharing. There is a long way to go to address the level of injustice related to recognition of the basic right of a communication system and the funding and appropriate services this would need to become a reality. But the beauty is definitely present as we chat over the listserve, gather at conferences, workshops and local get togethers and make new connections which often lead to friendships. Of particular joy to me has been the number of young people who communicate with AAC who have started attending and presenting at the AGOSCI Conference.

An issue the Executive has been sorting out is the advertising of workshops and products on the listserve. It was decided that the listserve should only advertise AGOSCI workshops. This is because often other information is only relevant to a small geographical area. There was the risk of the listserve losing its usefulness if subscribing meant that many irrelevant emails were received. Workshops not planned by AGOSCI can be placed on the website by contacting the relevant State rep and forwarding the information to them. I enjoy the banter on the listserve that involves professionals, users of AAC and parents, and other interested people.

We need to thank and say goodbye to Nathenya Fall our NSW representative who has taken a sea change to northern NSW. In her place we welcome Harriet Korner and are very grateful that she was so quickly willing to take on the role. Many thanks are also extended to all involved in the Executive for keeping things organised and happening in the states. I would also like to thank Hilary Johnson who has made a wonderful start to documenting the history of AGOSCI, Jane Farrall who has put so much effort into planning for the 2008 National Tour, and Sally Hunter for putting loads of time and effort into the website and listserve.



The Executive plan to have their annual get together in Adelaide in March 2008, so if you have any issues you would like discussed, please let us know. There is a need to draw from a wider cross section of the AAC community in our membership, especially more people who use AAC to communicate. We will continue to discuss any changes to the website, AGOSCI In Focus, fine tuning the process for scholarships to events and much more.

Please keep our professional development events in your calendar and tell others. It would be great to see many benefit from two upcoming events: Karen and David's 2008 visit to teach on literacy and AAC, and AGOSCI's 2009 conference in Canberra. Scholarships will be available for the conference, make sure people who use AAC and their families are informed about these.

And to let Marceau have the last say.... "Never get a mime talking. He won't shut up."

Let's keep chatting with our eyes, faces, bodies, hands, and with whatever tools have been placed before us!

BEEN OUT OF CONTACT LATELY?

If your contact details have recently changed, remember to update your details with your State Representative.

You can also update them on the website or via email ...

www.agosci.org.au



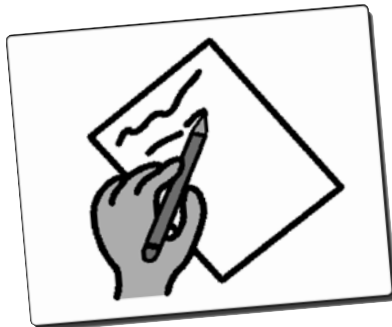


Notations ...

AGOSCI Inc. Secretary's report

by Melissa Bakes

Hi everyone,
It was a busy start to the year with the 007 Conference bringing in many membership forms. I think I'm over that hump now with just the usual secretary jobs for now: banking cheques, forwarding information, answering enquiries, etc., etc. I'd first like to congratulate the Melbourne conference committee for an absolutely fantastic conference. I had such a great time. It was great to catch up with many members and the new and past executive committee members. We had a really productive two days, meeting as the new executive, discussing lots of wonderful ideas for moving forward, in particular, I'm really pleased with a focus on rural and remote areas.



I have included the minutes from the recent Annual General Meeting (AGM) at the conference in this copy of AGOSCI *In Focus*. We had a quite a few laughs at the AGM amongst the serious business.

Just a reminder that with regards to phone enquiries, when you leave a message please leave an after house number. Alternatively you can email me. As I am at work during the day I don't get to the messages until I get home. That usually means I can't get back to anyone until the next day and sometimes I forget throughout the course of a busy day at work. I give my apologies to anyone who has had to wait a few days for a reply. Alternatively you can leave a message on my mobile: 0414 369 535. The new phone/fax machine is working out a treat.

All I really have to report on for the moment are the membership numbers. At the moment we have around 226 members. That is up on last years figures at this time of year. I have seen some new names again this time around. So the word is getting out there. Thanks again to all of those who have rejoined. Your continued membership is appreciated and valued. From a state by state/territory perspective membership numbers are as follows- Queensland 60, Victoria 51, New South Wales 38, South Australia 28, West Australia 13, Australian Capital Territory 15, Tasmania 15, Northern Territory 6, and with 7 members in New Zealand. We continue to grow each year.

State Reports



Victoria

by Melissa Blazey & Helen Tainsh

Hello again to all Victorian AGOSCI members. It has been a busy last few months for us with Melissa getting married and taking a lovely and long honeymoon. But we are both back on board now and raring to go!!

We would like to thank everyone who expressed interest in being involved in the Victorian state committee. The committee has been formed to assist us in the organisation of AGOSCI state events. We invite as many people as possible to become involved. It is a great way to network and share ideas. We are keen to hear from our members about what AGOSCI events they would like to see happen here in Victoria. If anyone is interested in being a part of this committee please contact Helen or Melissa.

Thank you to everyone that attended our last committee meeting. We feel it was very productive. We have begun organising a PD event for later this year or early 2008. Look out for information coming your way. We are also very excited about the National Tour next year. We hope you are all getting excited too!



South Australia

by Janelle Sampson

Is it November already??? How quickly this year has gone. It only seemed like a few weeks ago that I was writing the last state report. Things have been pretty quiet since then, although I feel like things have still been busy with discussions and planning amongst the executive committee and other state reps in preparation for next year's national tour. The date for the AGOSCI National Tour in Adelaide next year is June 24, 2008. A registration flyer will be circulated shortly so keep the date clear in your diary as Karen Erickson and David Koppenhaver are not to be missed. We did try to organize a webcast in one of SA's rural centres, however couldn't make the numbers. For those in the South East of the state, maybe one of the Victorian webcast sites would be closer to travel to. We are always happy to have you in Adelaide though.

Hopefully all members also received an e-mail or flyer for the upcoming professional development event. This will be held on November 22nd from 6-7.30 in the Novita Boardroom at the Regency Park Centre. We will be playing a webcast from the AAC-RERC website presented by David McNaughton called Supporting Transition for Individuals who use AAC. Full details are up on the AGOSCI web page (www.agosci.org.au) under the SA events page.

If you didn't receive the information on this, please contact me as I may have incorrect contact details. Also, as always, if you have suggestions for an SA event, please contact me and I'll assist you to coordinate it. I hope you all have a great Christmas and new year.



State Reports (cont)

New South Wales by Harriet Korner

AGOSCI NSW held a very successful event on 23 July, an AGOSCI Conference 2007 feedback afternoon, with more than 40 people attending organised by Nathenya Fall. People from NSW who had attended and presented at the AGOSCI conference were able to share information with others in the state.

Special thanks to Nathenya Fall for being the AGOSCI representative during 2007. Nathenya has moved up to the North Coast and we are all missing her.

An Aided Language Stimulation Workshop was held at The Spastic Centre (TSC) at Prairiewood on 31 July attended by Disability Consultants, NSW Department of Education and Training (DET) and families. The main focus was on "light" technology and developing comprehensive communication systems for interactive communication.

In NSW forums were held on **Accessing the Future: Assistive Technology in Education and Employment** in Sydney, Newcastle and Bombaderry, with over 600 people attending. These were organised as a collaboration between DET, Newcastle University, Illawarra TAFE, University of Western Sydney and the Centre for Developmental Disability Studies.

In NSW there have been over 74 Makaton Basic Workshops since the start of 2007, across both government and non government organisations and for all age groups. A successful Makaton Presenter Training course was held in June 2007, with 30 people trained, including one person from the Northern Territory. All new presenters will need to conduct their first supervised workshop within a twelve month period. 20 Makaton Kits for NSW, are now located across metropolitan and rural regions. It will not be necessary to run central Makaton Workshops in 2008 as there are now regular workshops being run locally in regions across NSW.

The Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care has been rolling out Inclusive Communication and Behaviour Support (ICABS) training to direct care staff working in group homes and large residential units. Last year 995 staff were trained in ICABS and an additional 500 staff attended Makaton Basic Workshops. A strong interest in the use of augmentative and alternative communication is being assisted by the opening of 20 Communication Resource Libraries across NSW, for use by DADHC staff to create AAC resources for their clients with complex communication needs. Recently, the Minister Kristina Kenneally opened the Communication Resource Library in Dubbo. Staff at the Stockton Centre will celebrate the official Opening of their Communication Resource Library and also plan to celebrate 30 years of Makaton at Stockton (Hunter Residences).

Chattercamp was run during the October school holidays by TSC and it was the first time a communication camp has been run in NSW. See the Camp Roundup article in this issue for further information.

The speech pathology Multicultural Interest Group recently ran a panel discussion session on 19th October looking at the issue of AAC for people with complex communication needs from CALD backgrounds. A project of interest was the second part of the pilot Cantonese Makaton Workshop to be run for Cantonese speaking families by Eunice Law on 29 October at TSC.

The Disability Initiative and Discipline of Speech Pathology are hosting a workshop on "Expressive Language for Pre-reading and Non-reading Clients" by Associate Professor Bruce Baker and Dr Tracy Kovach on 31st October at the Cumberland Campus, University of Sydney.

The CP Institute will be running an Introduction to Minspeak on 21 November at The Spastic Centre, Allambie and an Introduction to Technology on 29 November in Dubbo.

In NSW evidence based practice is encouraged through the NSW EBP Network, a SPA member network. Relevant EBP interest groups belonging to this network include the AAC EBP Interest group and the Paediatric Feeding Interest Group (PFIG). The Annual NSW SP EBP Extravaganza is being held at the end of the year on 18th December. Last year this provided an interesting snapshot of Critically Appraised Topics and therapy trends across a wide range of areas.

In 2008 we will be hosting the AGOSCI National Study Tour in July. This will be very exciting with Karen Erickson and David Koppenhaver presenting on AAC and Literacy.

I would also like to give advance notice of another exciting event being organised for NSW, Gayle Porter will be presenting a two day workshop on Pragmatic Organisation Dynamic Display's (PODD's) in March 2008. If you'd like to know what PODD's are please give me a call.

If you would like to have some other meetings, a chance to network and share ideas or to explore a topic of interest then let me know. I can be contacted by email hkorner@tscnsw.org.au or by phone 02 9757 4322.



Australian Capital Territory by Lisa Hanley

The ACT branch was lucky enough to have Jane Farrall (Spectronics) talk to us recently on "Engineering the environment for AAC". Jane, as always, was a fabulous presenter and inspired us all. We had a great turnout with existing members and some newbies along for the night.

The 2009 Conference committee has been hard at work meeting and planning the 2009 conference thanks to the leadership of Jennie Lindsay. We are all very excited and enthusiastic and went along to the re-opening of the Canberra Convention Centre hosted by Mike Munro. We were able to view the conference centre rooms, we were all were impressed with the gala affair and the venue and excitedly looking forward to upcoming conference.



State Reports (cont)



Queensland

by Anne Pearson

Like all of the state representatives, we have been busy planning for the 2008 National Tour. Karen Erickson and David Koppenhaver will be presenting "Literacy in AAC" on the 16th of June, so save this date in your 2008 diaries! Karen and David will be web casting their workshop on 27th of June to other areas. Plans for a far North Queensland site and another possible area are being discussed so stay tuned if you live outside of South-East Queensland.

On another note, I am very pleased to say that Melanie Waalder is taking a temporary break from her role as Queensland representative as she looks after her new baby boy, Ryan. Congratulations Melanie!



West Australia

by Sally Hunter

The WA chapter has not had any official events lately. The local AAC devices interest group continues to meet regularly and if people wish to receive information about this group please feel free to contact Sue Ash or Danielle Lampropoulos at the Centre for Cerebral Palsy. Much collaboration locally has occurred between Royal Perth Rehab, The Centre for Cerebral Palsy and the Independent Living Centre over delivery of AAC content in the Curtin University undergraduate Speech Pathology course. This has been a valuable experience for all who hope to promote quality in this area of service delivery.

Perth once again hosted Bruce Baker who presented the PIXON project, which I understand our own Janelle Sampson (SA representative) was instrumental in the development of. Bruce also brought with him Dr Tracey Kovach who presented the *Continuum of Learning for Children Using AAC*. Tracey's presentation was very interesting and challenged us to consider the important notion of critical pathways in the implementation of AAC for children with complex communication needs.

On the Listserve front I just wanted to thank all who contribute and say how friendly and positive our list serve is which is a credit to us all. Keep up the good work the great sharing and discussions.



Tasmania

by Diane Symons

oken to several AGOSCI members and other interested people about how best to involve members from around the state. We are forming links with some existing regional groups and planning to arrange state wide meetings to occur in most regions. We aim to have at least one meeting or event that is easy to attend from each area of state.

In November we are looking forward to Gayle Porter presenting her Pragmatic Organisation Dynamic Display (PODD) Introductory Workshop in Launceston. While this is not an AGOSCI event, the push to have this workshop in Tasmania came from people who attended the AGOSCI conference

in Melbourne. It's great to see that the enthusiasm from the conference is still continuing.

I submitted a letter to the editor of the Examiner newspaper in relation to articles that had appeared about the shortfall in funding of assistive technology, in particular communication devices. Unfortunately it was not published, but please keep your eye out for other media opportunities and I'll do my best to respond.



Northern Territory

by Anne Dixon

The second half of 2007 has been busy and challenging for AGOSCI NT. Two hugely successful workshops were presented by Professor Justine Joan Sheppard, the Certification Workshop for the Dysphagia Disorders Survey, and the Mealtime Management Workshop for Families and Carers, which gained ratings of 4.4 and 4.7 out of 5 respectively. Co-sponsorship from the Centre for Developmental Disability Studies, University of Sydney and the NT Department of Health and Community Services made it possible for allied health staff, support workers from a range of organisations, and families from across the Northern Territory to attend.

The activity around these two workshops forced the AGOSCI Special Interest Group into the background for a few months, however, things are back on track with another meeting in November. I'd like to thank all those who have helped with the workshops and interest group during 2007, particularly Franceska Edis and Marion Mettam.

There are some major events planned for 2008 with negotiations underway with Karen Bloomberg to present a day workshop in February 2008, Wendy Webster to present on Aided Language Stimulation, and a video linkup for the Literacy in AAC National Tour with Karen Erickson and David Koppenhaver in June 2008.

This all makes for an exciting and busy year and naturally I'd like to encourage lots of new members for 2008. AGOSCI NT will be striving to find ways to include the more rural and remote areas of the Northern Territory; always a challenge. I'm looking forward to it all and I'll be accepting all the help I can get!!

Want to know what's happening in your state?

Simply log onto the website and click on the map

www.agosci.org.au



ISAAC Australia – President’s Report

The Australian Chapter of ISAAC

by Cathy Olsson

catherine.olsson@novita.org.au

Hello to all the AGOSCI members. I have the privilege (?) of submitting a report to the AGOSCI newsletter because of my role as Branch President for the Australian Chapter of the International Society for Augmentative and Alternative Communication. For the few (I hope) of you who don't already know about ISAAC, it is an international organization, with Chapters in 14 countries and members in a further 50, that promotes awareness and understanding of AAC across the world, and has a vision for everyone in the world who could communicate more easily through the use of AAC to be able to do so. There are obvious overlaps with AGOSCI's role and vision; hence my invitation to write a report for AGOSCI! For more information about ISAAC and its activities across the globe go to the ISAAC website at <http://www.isaac-online.org/en/home.shtml>. The site has recently been remodelled and it has heaps of information. I will be referring you back there for further information about some of the things I will touch on in my report.

Where to start! As I write we are part way through the first International AAC Awareness month. ISAAC members and AAC enthusiasts (including AGOSCI members I am hoping) all over the world have been involved in a range of activities, and it is hoped and anticipated that the event will grow each year. I am looking forward to getting reports about events that have been done in Australia, as well as photos, and will be submitting a report to ISAAC International early in November. Look out for more information next edition! And start thinking and planning what you could do next year to be part of getting across the message about AAC as part of a global event. ISAAC offers a

number of awards and scholarships. Though it will be too late to apply for the Words +/ISAAC Outstanding Consumer Lecture Award and the Echovoice/ISAAC award by the time this magazine is published, information about these awards is available on the ISAAC website, and a long lead time to prepare an application for the next time they are offered wouldn't be a bad idea!!

The Ablenet Literacy/ISAAC award, offered to professionals who are furthering the field of Augmentative & Alternative Communication (AAC) and literacy by helping people develop the ability to read and write as well as use AAC systems, is due on January 15th 2008, along with the Bridge School International/ISAAC scholarship. This *teacher in training* program offers an opportunity to learn and teach Augmentative & Alternative Communication methods in an educational centre of excellence in the United States. And even further down the track, April 1st is the deadline for the Shirley McNaughton Exemplary Communication award, presented to an ISAAC member in recognition of her/his sensitive, caring and insightful teaching of persons who use Augmentative and Alternative Communication. This award provides an internship opportunity for training in Blissymbolics at the Blissymbolics Learning Centre in Bala, Ontario, Canada. Finally, April 15th is the deadline for the Sherri Johnson/ISAAC conference consumer travel scholarship. This scholarship celebrates Sherri's many years of dedication to advancing the



International Society for Augmentative and Alternative Communication



13th Biennial Conference
International Society for Augmentative
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Come to Montréal to join colleagues from around the globe for this important international gathering.

Under the banner "Leading the Way", the 13th Biennial ISAAC Conference will bring together professionals and researchers from the fields of rehabilitation, education, government and industry, as well as AAC system users and their families, to explore the latest developments and improvements in augmentative and alternative communication.

The conference theme is Leadership. Individuals who use AAC for their daily communication have increasingly taken on leadership roles in many different ways. Examples of leadership will be showcased as part of the 2008 conference program.

2008 is the 25th anniversary of ISAAC. We will be celebrating the history of ISAAC and AAC, which has changed enormously in the last 25 years, and will continue to evolve in the future.

Registration opens January 2008. Early-bird registration closes 1/6/08.
For programme details, registration, travel tips and more, go to www.isaac2008.org



ISAAC Australia ... (cont)

communication and quality of life of people who rely on AAC, and can contribute to defraying the costs for a person who uses AAC of attending the ISAAC conference.

This leads in nicely to the Biennial ISAAC International Conference. Hopefully lots of you have already submitted your abstracts for the next Montreal conference (for further information, go to the website or see the information box elsewhere in this edition). Despite the fact that I am povvo (as you may guess, I am a Summer Heights High fan!) after a long service leave OS trip this year, I will definitely be scraping up the funds to attend. Attending the conference is a wonderful learning opportunity and chance to meet and feel a member of the fabulous AAC community. The Australian Chapter of ISAAC will be acting as a central clearing house for information sharing amongst people who plan to attend the conference, so.... if you discover a great titbit of Montreal information, whether it be cheap accommodation or recommendations for restaurants, or are seeking information or wanting to connect with others who are going, email our Secretary Merrin Hurse on mhurse.crc@scopevic.org.au , or me at catherine.olsson@novita.org.au.

I want to thank the wonderfully generous individuals who agreed to donate their fees for a day or more of their time to ISAAC. This was in response to the brilliant and outside of the square suggestion from AGOSCI to organize some rural and remote training using some local talent, at the same time raising some funds for ISAAC. Thanks to Mark Barber, Gail Porter, Karen Bloomberg, Jo Watson, and Hilary Johnson.

Progress continues on clarifying the relationship between the Australian Chapter of ISAAC and AGOSCI, and on sorting out the different roles for them both, where there is overlap, and how the two organizations can work together for the benefit of our shared and different members.

A final, but important word, if you aren't already a member, please consider joining ISAAC (membership form is an insert in this magazine). Aside from giving you reductions on your registration fees for the ISAAC conference, and subscription fees for that font of knowledge, the AAC journal, it is a way for you to feel a part of the AAC community worldwide, to play a part in reaching out to other nations and communities in our region, and to contribute to the growth of understanding, awareness and knowledge about AAC across the world.

Hope you have all had a happy AAC Awareness month.

**Want some information
about AGOSCI?**

**Contact Melissa Bakes
1800 002 950**

Makaton Report

by *Karen Bloomberg*

Joint National Training Coordinator, kbloomberg.crc@scopevic.org.au

Makaton Australia has had a busy year nationally in 2007. Presenter training has occurred in South Australia, New South Wales, and Victoria, and the first national interest group meeting took place at the AGOSCI conference in Melbourne. This inaugural Makaton breakfast meeting attracted over 50 delegates from across Australia, New Zealand and the Cook Islands.

This year a training meeting was also held in Sydney with representatives from every state except Tasmania. The meeting in Sydney was to review and finalise the national Makaton presenter training package for Australia. The national training package has been designed to establish a level of quality assurance and to ensure the consistency of training across Australia. The development of the package has been a collaborative process with input from State trainers – Colette Power (Western Australia), Lyn Rule (South Australia), Heather Cullen (Victoria), Teena Caithness and Rebecca Sutherland (NSW), Gina Privatera and Amanda Hartmann (Queensland) and the national training coordinators – Karen Bloomberg and Andy Smidt. A national mentoring program has also been underway for the last few years. The aim of the mentoring program is to train suitable candidates to become State trainers and to independently run their own Presenter training on a state-by-state basis.

The national training package has now been completed and was used for the most recent Presenter training in Melbourne. Nineteen participants took part in the 3 ½ day workshop. The participants included speech pathologists working in early childhood, school-aged and adult services, a teacher working in special education, disability support workers, and an early childhood assistant.

The theory content in Makaton Presenter training covered information on the development of communication skills, unaided systems, aided systems and strategies, modification of manual signs, adult learning styles, teaching strategies, resources, and relevant research areas. There was also many hours devoted to sign production and sign fluency. Participants also had the opportunity to run a mini-workshop where they taught a theory component and a selected set of signs. The mini-workshop is a preamble to the delivery of a supervised workshop within a year of the presenter training course.

Makaton Presenter training gives participants an overview of augmentative communication with an emphasis on unaided strategies and key word sign. The aim is for Makaton presenters to have an understanding of AAC and be able to answer questions and give information on all aspects of AAC.

Note: Andy Smidt has since resigned as joint national training coordinator but remains involved with Makaton Australia and has a keen interest in research.



ASD: Diagnosis From a Different Perspective

by Paula Hartwig (Speech and Language Pathologist)
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If there is something that I have learnt as I get older it is that politics will always haunt us, no matter how hard we try to avoid it. It not only influences our lifestyle but is increasingly influencing the implementation of professional standards and processes throughout our work place. I am writing this article about my recent experience in the diagnostic process of ASD as a 'Speech and Language Therapist' in Wales. However as I write this, the word Autism is being stretched across our television screens and newspapers as a political mud fight begins between the Liberal and Labour parties as we get ready for the upcoming federal election.

I think that it is great that funding improved services into the diagnosis and intervention of Autism is being politically discussed as it will help educate Australian's about the increasing prevalence and economical impact of Autism on Australian families. However I do question the impact of this debate on diagnostic standards within Australia. A report prepared for the Australian Advisory Board on Autism Spectrum Disorders on 'The Prevalence of Autism in Australia: Can it be established from existing data?' (2007) documented the fact that "diagnosis and assessment services vary between and within States and Territories in regards to the personnel involved in the diagnosis and assessment process and the diagnostic classification systems and tools used." After reading this article it made me reflect on how effective and influential the diagnostic process used in the Bro Morgannwg National Health Service Trust of Wales was in supporting the parents and intervention process for the early diagnosis of Autism and related disorders. In following is a summary of the people involved and the diagnostic process used within the Bro Morgannwg National Health Service Trust of Wales.

Who was involved?

Bro Morgannwg used an intra-agency and multi-disciplinary model in the diagnosis of an Autism Spectrum Disorder in children up to 19 years of age. This involved the formulation of the 'Panel for Autistic Diagnosis' or 'PAD'. This panel was led by the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service. The following team members were involved:

1. Child and Adolescent Psychiatrists (part of the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services) - responsible for leading PAD meetings, keeping data on PAD process and formalizing diagnosis (if made)

2. Consultant Community Paediatrician (part of the Bro Morgannwg National Health Service Trust of Wales) - responsible for co-ordinating the medical investigations (if needed) and ruling out developmental problems (e.g., hearing loss)
3. Speech and Language Therapists (part of the Bro Morgannwg National Health Service Trust of Wales) - responsible for providing communication assessment report for all students as well as intervention (including parent programs).
4. Educational Psychologists (part of the Bridgend Council, Local Education Authority) - responsible for providing report on school needs and degree of learning difficulty for all students, educational placement and parent programs.
5. Inclusion Co-ordinator for Communication and ASD (part of the Local Education Authority) - responsible for providing educational support and parent programs.
6. Occupational Therapists were also involved when children presented with a range of sensory issues.

Diagnostic Process

The PAD met to discuss children who had been referred to the panel. Referrals could only be made by one or more of the following professions:

1. Child and Adolescent Psychiatrist
2. Paediatrician
3. Speech and Language Therapist
4. Educational Psychologist

Once a referral had been made, all four professional areas were required to submit a report. Once all four reports had been received by the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service, the child's name was added to the PAD discussion list. This meant that at the forthcoming PAD meeting, the child would be discussed by the PAD team members whilst taking into consideration all report findings and the ICD-10 diagnostic criterion for autistic spectrum disorders.

Children did not always clearly meet the ICD-10 diagnostic criterion due to discrepancies in social interaction skills and specific behaviours. This did not specifically reflect the observation and opinions of different professionals. This instead reflected the variation of behaviour within specific



ASD: Diagnosis From a Different Perspective (cont)

social situations. In order to make sense of the child's social interaction skills the 'Autism Diagnostic Observation Schedule' or 'ADOS' is used. This is a semi-structured assessment that allows you to observe social interaction skills and behaviours that specifically relate to a diagnosis of a pervasive developmental disorder. Observations are recorded during the assessment by more than one individual and then discussed following the assessment by the observation team which code the findings and formulate a diagnosis. The findings are then used to calculate whether a child falls within the specific category of 'autism' or the more broader category of 'autistic spectrum disorder'. This assessment can also rule out whether or not a child does in deed fit the criterion for autism. The ADOS could be administered and scored by any profession once they have received training.

Once a diagnosis is made through the PAD process a meeting with the parents is organized. This meeting usually involves the Child and Adolescent Psychiatrist as well as another PAD



... a more coordinated approach between the health service and the school systems helps support the child and the parents in dealing with the diagnosis ...



team member who examines the diagnostic process with the parents. This is done with all parents regardless of whether the child receives a diagnosis of ASD. If the child does receive a diagnosis of ASD then the parents are provided with a small amount of information as well as a follow-up appointment. The follow-up appointment allows the parents to absorb some of the information disseminated and ask questions specific to their child's needs. At this time, parents are also asked to join in the next National Autistic Society Earlybird Programme within the area which is run by members of the PAD team as well as other professionals within the associated agencies.

Intervention Programs

The National Autistic Society Earlybird Programme (National Autistic Society Website) is a three-month programme which combines group training sessions for parents with individual home visits supplemented with video feedback. The National Autistic Society Earlybird Programme aims:

- To support parents in the period between diagnosis and school placement
- To empower parents and help them facilitate their child's social communication and appropriate behaviour within the child's natural environment

- To help parents establish good practice in handling their child at an early age so as to pre-empt the development of inappropriate behaviours.

Following the Earlybird program it is then up to the parents, schools and/or therapists to put in place appropriate intervention strategies specific to the child's needs.

Conclusion

It was an incredible experience being a part of a dynamic and inclusive team approach to diagnosis of Autism. I learnt and understand more about the individual team roles as well as the difficulties with diagnosis. Although this diagnostic process is the selected approach in the Bro Morgannwg area, this was not a documented standard throughout the Wales or England National Health Service. This supports findings that were documented by the Australian Advisory Board on Autism Spectrum Disorders in the report 'The Prevalence of Autism in Australia: Can it be established from existing data?' (2007), which stated that there has been limited research into which diagnostic criteria is more appropriate or which diagnostic process has more impact on intervention outcomes. In saying this, I do believe that a more coordinated approach between the health service and the school systems helps support the child and the parents in dealing with the diagnosis as well as imputing the most appropriate strategies to deal with behaviour, social skills and communication.

Research is definitely needed to identify the most appropriate diagnostic method for Autism in Australia. It will alleviate the questioning of diagnostic processes and put a greater focus on improving these children's quality of life. The impact of future research may also have a substantial knock-on effect for resourcing and intervention services across Australia.

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Augmenting the Speech of People Diagnosed with Autism/ASD:

Assuming Competence and Addressing Movement

by Rosemary Crossley

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Since the 1970's AAC, practitioners and manufacturers have focused on the development of practical fixes for the individual communication aid needs and access problems of people with obvious physical disabilities. Now, in addition, we need to turn our attention to people with less obvious movement disorders, such as autism, and open up new possibilities for their participation and development.

While we will never devise a generic AAC therapy that is suitable for everyone with autism, because Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) includes people with a large range of different speech and movement disorders (as does cerebral palsy), it should be possible to devise a lexicon of movement disorders such as disinhibition and perseveration, and to assemble a therapeutic pharmacopeia to address them.

Presuming Competence

Typically, successful AAC intervention is based on an underlying presumption of competence. We keep trying different access strategies with a non-speaking child with severe athetosis because we presume that the child has both something to communicate and the motivation and potential to be an effective AAC user. Consequently, we feel the onus is on us to find the right strategy for the child.

Negative, and often uninformed, articles about autism in the media have contributed to a presumption of incompetence in people with severe autism (those who are most likely to need AAC) and a belief that they are not interested in personal interaction. This has resulted in a shift in onus to the autistic individual to prove their worthiness, either by demonstrating skills (often without necessary adaptations e.g. being expected to read aloud or write to demonstrate literacy, regardless of the individual's obvious speech and hand function limitations) or by co-operating with boring and repetitive tasks of no obvious relevance to communication. Many well-intentioned therapists and teachers give up partly because a student's failure with the set tasks confirms their underlying beliefs about competency, and partly because they feel bad about 'forcing' communication on someone who is believed to prefer isolation.

Consequently in many specialist schools AAC intervention for children with autism is restricted to PECS, the Picture Exchange Communication Strategy, which is intrinsically limited to the communication of basic needs/wants (Gresswell & Moore, 2006), and manual sign, of which the effectiveness may be restricted by the hand function impairments of the children and the sign vocabularies of their communication partners. DEAL staff have seen approximately 1,000 individuals with a diagnosis of ASD since 1986, all of whom lack functional speech. Virtually all of those born after 1980 have been exposed to sign and/or

PECS but fewer than 50 people have arrived using more than 100 signs or symbols. Most individuals have been reported to understand many more signs than they are using, in a way similar to people who understand many more words than they are saying.

Assessment

Communication, in any mode, is a complex motor task requiring accurate timing and the production of precise movement sequences. It is important not to assume that speech impairments are primarily due to cognitive impairments or to equate speech fluency and intelligence. The assessment of cognition in people without normal speech and hand skills is extremely unreliable. Many people assessed as significantly intellectually impaired prior to accessing AAC have successfully undertaken tertiary education once their communication and access impairments have been addressed (Crossley, 1997).

While lack of speech does not mean lack of understanding, children with little or no speech need an effective means of communication before they can show us what they know. Formal IQ assessments administered to children may produce

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It is not uncommon to find that children without speech have acquired far more knowledge and skills than they've been able to show.
”

meaningless results if the person cannot talk, write, sign fluently, point meaningfully, or if the person is not motivated by the tests or is in a state of acute anxiety (Dawson, Soulières, Gernsbacher, & Mottron, 2007). The results of IQ testing do not provide a good basis for AAC intervention.

When assessing a child with limited or no speech it is important not to base our intervention on their appearance, behaviour, daily living skills, reported academic skills, or previous cognitive assessments. This is because appearance, behaviour, daily living skills, and the assessment of academic skills and cognition are likely to be affected by the same neuro-motor problems that have impaired the person's speech, or by the frustration of being unable to communicate effectively (Donellan & Leary, 1995).

It is not uncommon to find that children without speech have acquired far more knowledge and skills than they've been able to show. Recently a 17-year-old girl and an 11-year-old boy from



Augmenting the Speech ... (cont)

different schools, both of whom have autism diagnoses and both of whom were described as having severe intellectual impairments, limited comprehension, and no literacy skills, attended Deal. The families reported that neither had been given a means of answering YES or NO by their special school teachers or therapists, much less access to any other AAC apart from PECS symbols, which were not being used at home. Given access to a Twin-Talker recorded with YES and NO, and shown how it worked, both students were immediately able independently to answer 10/10 simple yes/no questions correctly. They also both successfully undertook multiple choice reading assessments requiring them to read incomplete sentences and select the correct word from three wide-spaced 36pt font options to fill the gap. Both students were able to point clearly and independently although neither had fully-developed index finger isolation.

Both students been significantly under-estimated. While it may be possible for the boy to move into a mainstream class and obtain an academic education, such an opportunity has been missed for the 17-year-old girl, who is about to move into an adult day program. Every adult service has some clients like this whose skills and potential were missed while they were at school. Sadly, adult services rarely employ speech pathologists or offer formal AAC programmes, presuming that everything that could be done to assist their clients with specific communication skills had been done while they were at school. The specific skills for carrying out on-going reviews and partner training regarding communication are often not present in adult services.

Alternatives to Formal Assessment

Rather than formal assessments we prefer to gather information about the child's interests, pointing, and motor planning skills by observation and questioning the child's family and then to assemble some fun stuff and play around. We offer a variety of aids and strategies for the child to try while playing games, reading books, answering questions, and using computers: whatever motivates the child. Then we select the communication aids or strategies that work best and give them to the child to use at home and school.

While multiple sessions will be needed to establish the optimum long-term augmentative strategies for the child, our aim is to send the child home from the first session with a functional strategy for answering 'Yes' or 'No', usually by pointing to the desired response on a laminated Yes/No strip or by selecting from Yes/No cards. Both display symbols and words.

Movement Issues Affecting Pointing

Index finger pointing is an important skill that should be taught to every child with speech impairments who can use their hands. It may be necessary to set up fun activities such as finger painting or using push button toys that can be done with one finger. Super-gluing or velcroing a plastic cap from a soft drink bottle on to a switch makes a useful index finger isolation button for use with a switch adapted mouse (see Figure 1). Initially it may be necessary to do the activities co-actively while helping the child to extend the index finger and flex the unwanted fingers. Eye/hand co-ordination may be developed at the same time, by refusing to let the child touch any item they

are not looking at (however, this should only be done within the tolerance of each individual).

Deal's therapists have generated a list of 25 specific problems affecting finger pointing (see Figure 2), each of which has been found in some people with a diagnosis of autism and each of which has a specific treatment. Effective intervention for this population requires accurate differential diagnosis of the difficulty and individually tailored programs addressing any motor problems found, not autism per se.



[Figure 1]
Many children with autism find achieving index finger isolation a challenge

Equipment useful for developing index finger pointing includes:

- index finger isolation switches – the larger from Enabling Devices, the smaller made by attaching a bottle top to any small switch – to use with toys or switch-adapted mice
- VOCAs with small keys and deep keyguards – for practice activities prior to selecting a long-term aid
- stands for equipment to encourage wrist extension
- rods or thick markers for aid users to grasp with the unwanted fingers – the longer rod may be used to control impulsivity or perseveration
- finger pointing ball from Enabling Devices – very popular with young children.

For example, a person with autism who points repetitively may be helped by using an occupational therapy technique devised for people who exhibit perseveration following brain injury, in which the therapist interposes an unrelated action between two desired actions, to break flow, and force the person to refocus. Until the perseveration is addressed, the individual may be unable to access communication aids effectively, and is likely to 'fail' any non-speech assessments, such as vocabulary tests, which require pointing responses.

Facilitated Communication Training

One AAC technique that many people with autism have found useful is facilitated communication training (FCT). FCT is a strategy for teaching people who need to use AAC to use communication aids with their hands. It is particularly appropriate for people who can move their hands and arms freely but who have difficulties with other aspects of communication aid use



Augmenting the Speech ... (cont)

such as motor planning, eye-hand co-ordination, scanning displays, index-finger isolation, and pointing (Crossley, 1994). In facilitated communication training (FCT) a communication partner (facilitator) helps a potential communication aid user to overcome difficulties in hand use and develop functional movement patterns. The immediate aim is to allow the individual to make choices and to communicate in a way that has been impossible previously. Practice using a communication aid such as a picture board, speech synthesizer, or keyboard in a functional manner is encouraged, to increase the person's physical skills and self-confidence. As the student's skills and confidence increase, the amount of facilitation is reduced. The ultimate goal is for students to be able to use the augmentative communication strategies of their choice independently.

Facilitated communication training has been criticized in the past, because of concern that any messages generated with facilitation originated with the facilitators. In some cases, with naive or poorly trained facilitators, this was probably the case. However, at this stage, as people around the world are moving through the facilitation process to independence in communication aid use, it is clear that facilitation is not a sham, but a therapy technique which can produce significant gains if it is used well (Stanton, 2004, Biklen et al, 2005).

Every effort should be made to provide people who access keyboards or complex communication displays with facilitation with the skills to access aids containing a more limited range of options, such as YES/NO boards, PECS cards and multiple-choice boards independently, so they can communicate in the absence of a facilitator, and so they can confirm or reject communication produced with facilitation.

In Conclusion

Young children should continue to receive speech therapy, ideally from a therapist with PROMPT training if dyspraxia is an issue (Hayden, 2000), while also learning to use augmentative strategies. It may be some years before it is clear whether a given child's speech will be functional and the child should not be left frustrated, without a means of communication, while we wait on speech.

Because AAC intervention for people with ASD is relatively recent, many adults have not had access to any AAC. Adults without functional speech (including those with echolalia or stereotyped speech) can certainly benefit significantly from AAC, and may have far more skills than have been recognized. Every effort should be made to obtain an AAC assessment and to ensure that the necessary training and support are provided to allow individuals to develop their skills and confidence in using their new voices.

Ironically, once adults with autism start to achieve success with communication aids they are desperate to interact. On my regular visits to a centre for adults with autism I am besieged by people who want to communicate – in particular, by the most severely disabled people, those with no speech or sign. They had to be convinced to participate initially, but once they found a means of communication, however laborious, they were desperate to say things they had been saving up for twenty or thirty years. Common sentiments, expressed in many different ways, are "Why can't I talk?" and "Make me talk."

Even if we cannot answer that question, and cannot enable adults with autism to speak, we do now have AAC strategies that can allow most people with autism to succeed in communicating and in demonstrating their underlying abilities. It is up to the AAC community to challenge the negative presumptions about severe autism that have left so many people living in endless frustration, with no means of expression, and to help people with autism, and their families and teachers, realize their potential.

Hand function problems affecting communication aid and keyboard use

1. Impaired eye/hand co-ordination
2. Difficulty scanning the communication display
3. Sequencing problems
4. Paralysis (uncommon in people with ASD)
5. Low muscle tone
6. High muscle tone
7. Tremor
8. Difficulty isolating and/or extending an index finger
9. Undecided hand dominance
10. Using both hands when only one is required
11. Radial/ulnar muscle imbalance
12. Range of movement limitations
13. Difficulty initiating movement
14. Impulsivity
15. Perseveration
16. Hemi-neglect (uncommon in people with ASD)
17. Unstable sitting position
18. Proximal instability
19. Reduced proprioception
20. Involuntary movements
21. Dysmetria (often associated with use of peripheral vision)
22. Movement planning difficulties - dyspraxia
23. Obsessions with particular keys or key sequences
24. Automatic completions of words or motor sequences
25. Disinhibition/distractibility

[Figure 2]

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Learning to Communicate Using Other People's Language

by Mark Barber

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The lives of many individuals with severe or profound intellectual and multiple disabilities are frequently dominated by long periods of boredom or the routine experience of days filled with activities which, although they might recognise, they don't understand. Left to fill in time, they frequently generate their own sensory events e.g.: making vocal noises; rocking; mouthing; hyperventilating; head rubbing; grinding teeth.

These sensations can be understood as being events that stand out from the rest of the day in that they are events that can be accomplished when the learner wants them to be accomplished. But perhaps more importantly, these events can be stopped as and when they wish them to be stopped. To the observer, they frequently don't appear to have any reason behind them but, before we make that judgement, ask yourself: why is it that when you sit on a bus or a train, you invariably see someone repeatedly spiralling a lock of their hair around their finger? (Answer: because 'its nice'). Why do many people cross their legs when they sit down? It has no reason, and indeed might be bad for circulation...so what's the point of *that*?

These behaviours are usually quite pleasant for the person doing them and they appear to address a need of some sort and, for whatever reason, these self directed, repetitive, unitary behaviours often become quite a feature of what we see someone with a profound intellectual disability demonstrating when they have no other focus for their attention. It must also be remembered that for someone with a profound intellectual disability who is described as 'preintentional' (i.e. they don't know about communicating on purpose), social conventions of politeness are completely unknown.

"Learners with Profound I.D. clearly differ from pre-intentional infants without disabilities.... They have had much longer than infants without I.D. to learn repeated patterns of unusual behaviours e.g. stereotypy or self-injury (Ephraim, 1997; Caldwell, 1996) as ways to reduce stress and shut out the unsafe external world ... or to provide interest in an otherwise understimulating environment." Samuel (2003).

People experiencing severe-profound intellectual disability with what are known as 'autistic spectrum disorders' also sometimes demonstrate what many people consider to be unusual behaviours although the reasons for them doing so are often very different. The cycles of behaviour might act as a smoke screen which obscures, or takes their mind off, the often scary and unpredictable world around them. But they might also be a less socially restrained version of the 'sensory conversation' we have with ourselves when we sit on the sofa, cross one leg over the other and watch TV. Whether they are repeated cycles of behaviour or just one or two of the limited range of physical movements that the learner has discovered that they can do,

they are different from the myriad other events that the person experiences in a given day because the *learner* initiates them and recognises them as their own.

Intensive Interaction

Intensive Interaction is an approach to supporting the development of very early communication and social agency and provides a context in which learners can explore the behaviours which sustain interaction. The approach is based on using behaviours that the learner will recognise as their own to develop a two way dialogue through which the fundamental communication skills and enjoyment of social interaction can be learnt. (e.g. Hewett & Nind, 1998; Nind & Hewett, 1994; 2001; 2006).

“using behaviours that the learner will recognise as their own to develop a two way dialogue”

Starting Intensive Interaction

Having decided that this approach might be appropriate for a learner you're working with, you should begin by observing them closely and note the behaviours that they use to 'talk to themselves' or to have a 'sensory conversation'.

Initially you might imitate the behaviours you see to advertise your presence; intriguing or attracting the learner's attention from what Caldwell (1996) calls 'solitary space' or the internal pleasure loop that the person finds in the predictable comfort of their behaviour. When the learner looks around and recognises 'their' behaviour happening somewhere else, their interest and focus momentarily moves from focussing on internal pleasure and crosses into 'social space'. That is, they begin to focus their attention on you, the practitioner, and what you are doing.

Imitation might continue to attract the learner's attention and at some point they may pause in their activity to monitor you, to check if you are still doing it. Once there appears to be a 'recognition' or connection between the two communicators (and this might take a few approaches), you might begin to 'reflect' the learner's behaviour by making sure you pause in your imitation when you see the learner restart their activity. At this stage, it's all about responding and being recognisable.

Once the 'game' is established, which might take minutes, hours, or more rarely, repeated encounters over days, and there



Learning to Communicate ... (cont)

is some level of established mutual recognition or recognition of the 'game', it may be time to 'converse'.

Before going on to the idea of 'conversing', it would be useful to give the reader an analogy:

I had spent four days in a huge South American hotel where nobody spoke English. I ate breakfast and dinner in a room with over 100 other residents and could not converse with them. When I entered the dining room I saw a sea of faces but related to none of them. As I left the hotel on the Friday morning, I heard someone checking in, in English, at the desk. I glanced around and saw him for around 5 seconds as I left the building to get my taxi to work. That night, as I entered the dining room, I scanned the sea of faces and immediately recognised the other English speaking resident.... I remembered him because he was suddenly significant – he spoke my language.

When you attract someone's attention using Intensive Interaction: you find common ground; you begin to share a language; you immediately make yourself prominent; you stand out from all of the other events, people, sensations or sounds that wash over them and around them as they effectively 'free-fall' through their day.

Conversations

Conversations involve mutual adjustment. They often involve exchanges of ideas, topics and themes. When we converse we look for common ground and explore it. Conversations dominated by imitation don't really satisfy either partner. But it is possible to vary the topic while still following the same subject – e.g. talking about cars might involve Fords, Toyotas, Chryslers, Datsuns, convertibles, 4X4s, SUVs, dragsters, hatchbacks and FI. Similarly, conversations in Intensive Interaction can vary around topics. Through games and dialogues based on



Understandable social transactions are a profoundly important aspect to anyone's quality of life.



the sounds and/or movements that the learner makes, the exchanges enable the learner to explore and experiment so over time they learn to recognise what it is s/he does that makes us do the things s/he wants us to do. As a skilled communicator, you are equipped to be able to assist the learner to explore 'game formats' in which you can, for example: join with their focus of attention; explore mutual anticipation; eye gaze; have physical dialogues; explore patterns of touch and reciprocity; express emotions; remember and return to familiar games. The practice of Intensive Interaction involves enjoyment of social time and using communication as a context for developing an awareness of others.

Understandable social transactions are a profoundly important aspect to anyone's quality of life. Conversations and dialogues based on familiar content and mutually negotiated rules help to break the remorseless cycle of isolation and passive reciprocity that many learners with complex intellectual disability routinely experience.

As these dialogues progress, as the skilled communicator we may be tempted assign intent to the behaviours of some learners by reading their facial expressions and/or body language. But, important as this may be, our purpose is not only to acknowledge their communication and then act accordingly but that the learner, who is unaware that they are communicating, learns that s/he has control – that s/he comes to understand that it's their actions that cause our response.

This is not something we can task analyse and teach step by step. Rather, learning occurs when we provide the environment that allows the learner to recognise something is happening because of something s/he does.

With thanks to Karryn Bowen for her enthusiasm and insights.

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We would welcome your contribution to our conference, please review the abstract submission guidelines provided on the following page.





Establishing a Communication System for a Girl with Rett Syndrome: A Parent's and Speech Pathologist's Perspective

by Gill Greenwood

Speech and Language Pathologist, greenwood.g.g@edumail.vic.gov.au

What is Rett Syndrome?

'Rett Syndrome is a unique developmental disorder that is first recognised in infancy and seen almost always in girls'. (Hunter, page 3, 2007)

Background

Louise is almost thirteen years old. I met Louise at the beginning of the school year. She is in a wheelchair, is non verbal but has well established eye contact and use of eye gaze. At that time she had a five cell multilevel communication book which she accessed using her fist.

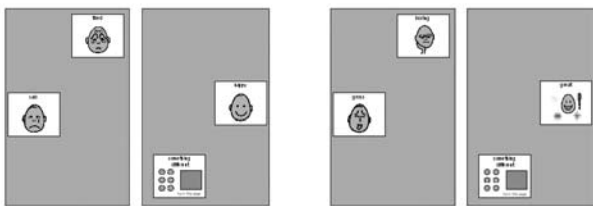
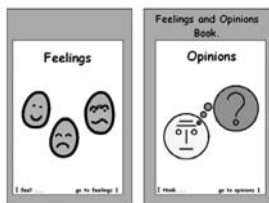
Louise was refusing to use her communication book, purposely turning her head to the side when the book was placed on her tray.

During computer time Louise demonstrated good concentration skills and meaningful switch access.

After discussions with the classroom teacher and her Mum, a communication plan was formed which involved a multi level book as well as a voice out put device.

Multi level book

A multi level high contrast book was devised specifically in the area of feelings and opinions. This topic was chosen because of the age of the student (early teen) and the focus of the class in Semester one was 'About Me'. The book was devised as a four cell eye gaze symbol book (see below).



Louise, using her eyes, can indicate if she wants to express an opinion ("I think.....") or a feeling ("I feel....."), then the communication partner can move to the appropriate



page interpreting out loud the eye gaze of Louise. I tried to incorporate words commonly used by teenagers, eg. suck, cool. The book is also modelled by the adults when interacting with Louise to express their feelings and opinions.

The feelings and opinions book has been an almost immediate success. Louise looks to the book that is always on display in the same place in the classroom when she wants to express her thoughts. The communication partners supporting Louise have to carefully consider the questions to ask her. An example being, Louise went shopping with one of her favourite carers. When asked "How was the shopping this weekend?" she answered "I don't care", however, when asked "How was the time with (carer)?" she answered "Great!" The book has been such a success that a series of topics is being created. So far they include: 'Something's Wrong', 'Questions' and 'Doing it' book. Books on 'Mealtime' and 'Daily Activities' are planned. Louise has a personal copy of each book to allow receptive and expressive communication and modelling to occur in as many settings as possible.

Although the style of the book changed for Louise, the family were familiar with the concept of symbols and multi level books.

From observation of Louise, I felt that we could provide a more comprehensive communication system for her, which would provide her with a voice. At school Louise uses a computer accessing a variety of programs including Clicker 4, interactive games and individualised PowerPoint presentations. This gave me the confidence to try a complex voice out put communication device.



Establishing a Communication System ... (cont)

Voice output device

Louise has been provided with a MightyMo with two switch access. The switch on Louise's left scans through the buttons and the switch on her right activates the message. This is hoped to reinforce the pragmatic concepts of 'no' (not this one) with the 'no' symbol traditionally being placed on the left side of her tray and 'yes' (this is the one that I want) supporting the 'yes' symbol on the right side of the tray. The switches are also coloured according to the corresponding colour of the yes/no symbols.

Louise's arms are in arm splints in order to reduce the mouthing and hair fiddling that is commonly seen in Rett Syndrome. Louise's switches are placed on a slight angle and at a distance so that she can access them with her hand.

The communication partner generally needs to place two fingers under Louise's dominant arm in order to support the movement between the two switches. All communication partners have been encouraged to sit facing Louise, and therefore, away from the MightyMo screen. This results in there being less partner influence on her conversation.

As with many students with complex communication needs, the motivation to make the communication effort can vary. I have been surprised by the type of communications expressed by Louise. Some examples include;

- She will activate her 'home news' button and to stare hard, meaning that Mum has forgotten to put some news on from last night and I'm not pleased! (Controlling the environment)
- Similarly, Louise will activate her 'school news' button and look to a particular adult, meaning that I want that person to put my news on today. (Controlling the environment)
- Louise will choose an activity during Music Therapy which is not the focus at the time, meaning I have had enough of this, let's do something else. (Controlling the environment)
- Louise will activate the 'hello' button discovering how different people respond to her. (Initiating conversation)
- Louise will activate her 'news' button quickly at news sharing time so that she tells her news first. (Retell)
- Louise will activate her 'confused feeling' button when a new person entered the classroom and she was not introduced. (Questioning)

I have been delighted with the early progress that Louise has made. She has had the device for four months. All communication tools are most effective when they are supported by the family. Louise's Mum has kindly provided the following responses to a series of questions.

1. What was your initial reaction when it was suggested that your child receive a MightyMo?
We have been wanting this for a long time but worried about our daughter's ability to access it and our ability to help her. Our feelings included excitement, anticipation and trepidation.
2. What positive effects, if any, do you feel the use of this device has had on your family?

We tried to use it frequently, especially to show family and friends – very motivating for her and us.

3. What negative effects, if any, do you feel the use of this device has had on your family?

It demands a lot of time to learn- not made for computer 'dummies'! Hard not to feel guilty if you're not making enough use of it.

4. Has the device lived up to your expectations? Please explain?

Yes and beyond. It is capable of so much - lots of versatility and possibilities.

5. Could anything have been done differently?

Make it more user friendly, I feel that I need a lot more training and I don't like the American accent.

6. Does the device help to clarify communication with your child?

Yes, we can share so much more with her about what has happened at school and at home.

7. What advice could you give to other families who are thinking of getting a device for their child?

Go for it! But be prepared to learn - it will be time consuming. Make sure it is insured.

8. Any other comments?

I think once we've put in what's needed and are more comfortable, it will be of enormous use to us all.

Conclusion

In summary, I believe that for a voice out put device to be effective there needs to be a strong partnership between the Speech Pathologist and the family. A girl with Rett Syndrome can be motivated to show her skills whilst she is learning new communication techniques. You do not need to wait until her skills are established before investigating a voice out put device or a communication book. Just because one mode of communication that is symbol based does not work, it does not mean that all symbol based systems will be ineffective. It is up to the Speech Pathologist to investigate what will work and to use observation to do so. Louise has so much to say, we have to find a way for her to say it.

"Expressive communication needs to be functional and worth the effort or it won't be used"! (Hunter, 2007, p. 310)

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Supporting Social Skills for People with Autism Spectrum Disorders

by Ylana Bloom, Dolly Bhargava and Elizabeth Ponce
dolly_bhargava@hotmail.com

Autism is a neurological disorder that results in difficulty with information processing. This means that the way we interact with a person with autism is critical for their development. Autism is diagnosed from the symptoms referred to as the 'triad of impairments' (American Psychiatric Association, 1994) in the areas of social interaction, communication, and repetitive and stereo-typical behaviours (Koegel & Koegel, 1995).

Autism affects the way people learn. They have difficulty following instructions and difficulty with understanding abstract concepts (Harrington, 1998). This means that figurative language can easily be misunderstood due to their literal way of thinking.

Autism affects the way people interact. People with autism have difficulty in understanding that communication is the dynamic exchange of subjective thought. Communication is limited to getting their needs and wants met. Conversation is the exchange of subjective thought. People with autism have impaired conversational skills in both verbal and non-verbal skills. Difficulties in communication can often result in frustration and behavioural issues.

Autism results in social deficits. People with autism have difficulties with awareness of self and of others. This can be seen in the difficulty in reading non verbal communication and body language. Many also have difficulty understanding appropriate and inappropriate behaviours. This can lead to appearing to do the wrong thing yet in fact, they are unaware of many social conventions. People with autism also have great difficulty in understanding that other people's thoughts, feelings and opinions are different to that of their own. This can be referred to as a Theory of Mind. People with autism have a weakened Theory of Mind. This can result in confusing and difficult situations.

In recent years there has been interest in facilitating the skills of social interaction skills for people with autism (Gutstein, 2000; Thiemman & Goldstein, 2004). Conversational skills are an important part of socialisation that can increase the opportunity for those children to be included by their peers.

It has been well documented that individuals with autism spend much of their lives without friends (Bauminger & Kasari, 2000; DiSalvo & Oswald, 2002; Gonzalez-Lopez & Kamps, 1997; Koegel & Koegel, 1995). It is common that they are more likely to be rejected by their peers, largely attributing to their difficulty in social interaction and maladaptive and socially unacceptable behaviours. Having friends is an important part of social skill development. By learning social skills, a person may increase their chances of fitting in, having an enhanced

sense of self-worth and knowing they have a toolbox they can use for social situations.

It has been stated that without intervention, children with autism rarely interact socially or communicate appropriately (Koegel & Koegel, 1995). This suggests that intervention is required to teach the skills of social interaction in order to increase positive social outcomes for those children affected. Now we are not suggesting 20 to 40 hours a week of therapy. It can be more effective if you incorporate the teaching of social skills into everyday life activities.

Approximately one third of children with autism develop some words yet fail to use this language appropriately (Hadwin, Baron-Cohen, Howlin, & Hill, 1997). Echolalic speech mostly falls in this category. High-functioning children with autism however, develop the most speech yet they still fail to develop normal communicative speech (American Psychiatric Association, 1994). Many of the individuals we work with have extreme difficulty with functional and pragmatic language. When teaching conversational skills, it must focus on the functional application of language in a variety of social settings.

Conversation is difficult for people with autism (Grandin, 1995). The need for ongoing monitoring and adjustments during a conversation is difficult and confusing. Repairing a breakdown is even more difficult (Quill, 2000), especially when there may be a lack of awareness of what a communicative breakdown is. More so, the function of language is typically limited to gaining an object or action rather than for social interaction that is a shared experience.

Initially, we look at communicative functions. It is important for the person to be aware of the reason we communicate such as to share news. Conversational skills can be divided into verbal skills: initiating; topic maintenance; ending conversation; perspective taking; and emotions and non verbal skills: eye contact and attention; appropriate proximity and touching; and voice.

We have presented some strategies that we have found useful with the people we work with. Throughout this article we have used some examples from our work with people with Autism - Jessica, Tim and Hugh. (Bloom, Y., Bhargava, D. & Ponce, E (2007). *Autism Series 2: Time to Talk – Some ideas for assisting people with autism and other disorders develop social conversational skills*. ICP. Beecroft.

Some of the strategies that will be discussed in this article include: self awareness; eye contact and attention; voice; conversational scripts; chat systems; cognitive mapping; people in my life; stories of social understanding; theory of mind; facial expression and Mr. Help



Supporting Social Skills ... (cont)

Self Awareness

Self awareness and the awareness of others is a huge issue for people with autism. Understanding who they are, who others are in their life and the environment is complex. With Jessica, she learnt about what her likes are and her dislikes are. We researched her family so that she could see where she fits in her family. Jessica learnt about the activities that she enjoys and learnt how to articulate her ideas.

Food (breakfast)
Do you like to eat:

Porridge	cereal		
Eggs	boiled	fried	scrambled
Toast	jam	vegemite	peanut butter

Food (junk)

Chips	lollies	chocolate	candy floss

My pets are:

Things that make me happy:

Things that make me angry:

Things that make me sad:

I am afraid of:

Things I don't like:

Eye Contact and Attention

Eye contact and attention is an area that is difficult for people with autism. Many people with autism have difficulty in looking at a person when talking. We took extra care when teaching Tim and taught him to use his toolbox and understand the reasons why it is important to try and may eye contact with the person he wanted to talk to. It was important for Tim to learn to manage the way he initiated attention in a way that was socially acceptable.

Story for looking at people

Sometimes I want to talk to someone..

This is when I look at the person

Why? ? ?

Because I show them I am interested.

That's a good thing.

It is OK to look.

I want to show that I am listening too.

Looking at a person can show this.

It is OK to look and listen.

I will try hard to keep looking at the person.











Supporting Social Skills ... (cont)


Voice

The way we use our voice is an important part of communication. We need to consider volume, pitch and how fast we are talking. People with autism often have difficulty with managing these aspects of their voice. For example some people present with a monotone voice which sounds very flat. These people can also have difficulty knowing when to shout and when to talk softly. For Jessica, we taught her to use her whisper voice when at the movies, her talking voice when talking with family and friends, and her loud voice during sports events or in danger.

Conversational Scripts

Conversational scripts can be used to show the dialogue between two people. It can show the listener and speaker roles. We gave Jessica a toolbox for talking. In this toolbox, she had scripts such as look at the person talking, wait for the person to stop talking before you say something. Jessica also had difficulty in initiating conversation appropriately, so part of this toolbox also included learning ways of starting a conversation appropriately. It is important to role play any scripting and use it in real life as much as possible.

What voice can I use?	
(number rating and voice label)	
1 Whisper voice	  cinema sleeping
2 Talking voice	<i>Regular voice</i>    talking at school at the table
3 Loud voice	   Asking for help At a loud place Sports (for cheering)



Ways to tell _____ about school:

I can say:

Hey (name)

Guess what I did today?

Do you know what I did today?

Can I tell you something?


My choice: _____

What happens when we talk too loud?

- Get a headache
-
-
-
-

When do we need to talk loud?

- During a football match
-
-
-
-



Ylana: Guess what happened to Milo


Jessica: What happened


?


Ylana: A big black bird ate all his food


Jessica: Oh no!


Ylana: I wonder what we should do?


Look 

Listen 

Answer 

Ask good questions 

Sit still 

Stand still 




Supporting Social Skills ... (cont)


Chat Book System


A chat book was developed to introduce Jessica to new experiences and the language associated with it. It is written in a format that has specific language and phrases related to the topic. This format is then used to support communication and the ability to transfer what the person has experienced. Many topics can be used and for Jessica, we used the library topic. We organised the chat book into sections like: vocabulary, what she did.


Things that I did at the library:


waited for library to open


returned my books 

said 'hi' to the librarian 

picked a book 

read a book 

chose a video 

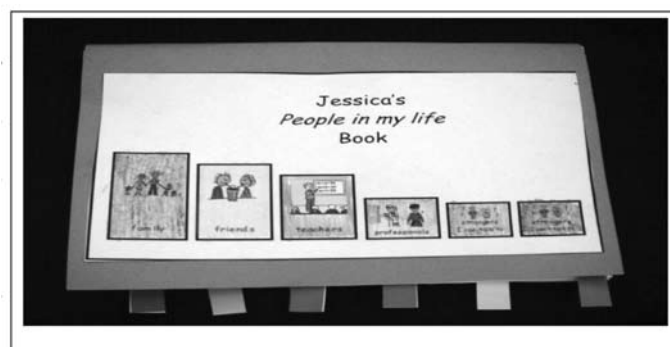
checked my books out 

Cognitive Mapping

Cognitive mapping or mind map uses the notion of De Bono's (cited in Carl, 1996) six thinking hats as a framework for thinking that provides a broad explanation of a subject. For a person with a limited schema and consequently sees life in a much more limited way and does not automatically make connections between thoughts and experiences, it is useful to mind map a topic. This means that for Hugh, when we said the word cocktail, his knowledge about the world was limited to a fish cocktail, whereas we were referring to a drink. We extended his knowledge by showing him the different types of cocktails through a mind map.

People in My Life

We developed a program that teaches the individual about the social conventions associated with the way they should interact with others. It involves identifying people in the individual's life and recognising their level of importance. This can range from the most important people through to people that we interact less with, like strangers. Jessica learnt scripts of the types of behaviours that were appropriate with family members such as hugging, and to teachers, such as putting her hand up in class.



Stories for Social Understanding


People with autism have a weakness in the area of social understanding. We use stories for social understanding to develop social skills, modify behaviours and introduce changes. For Jessica, it is important that we read the stories to her. The language we use is within her comprehension level; but it is beyond her reading level. These stories also supported Jessica to learn about why we have conversations.


Some people cannot have sugar. Like Jess.
Some people can have sugar. Like Elizabeth.

Jess cannot have sugar.


BUT

It is Ok for Elizabeth to have sugar.

Jessica can stay calm and happy. 

It is OK! 

Opinion:

ASK: 

What drink do you like?
Elizabeth likes _____
Jessie likes _____
Mum likes _____



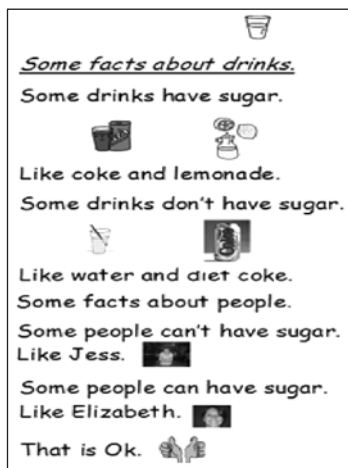
Supporting Social Skills ... (cont)

Theory of Mind

Theory of mind deficits can produce the inability to take into account what other people know. It can also lead to an inability to read and respond to other's intentions or understand the reasons behind other people's behaviour. It can also lead to an inability to understand misunderstandings or understand unwritten rules.

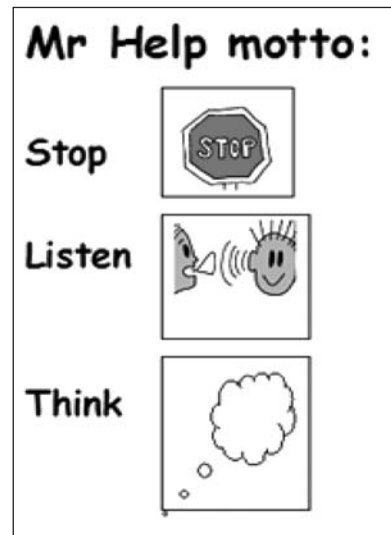
With Jessica, we looked at facts and opinions. We teach the difference between facts and opinions by explaining that there are certain facts that are specific to a topic and that people's opinions vary according to what they like and do not like. Jessica has difficulty with separating fact from opinion.

There are also many types of emotions. Many people with autism spectrum disorders have difficulty identifying their own emotions and that of others. Jessica quite often answered she was good, when in fact she was not. It is important to understand emotions from the inside-out. This is also why it is difficult to answer the questions "How do you feel today?" with a smiley face chart, when children may not understand how they are feeling. For Jessica, it was important identify what makes the person happy and what makes other people happy. We made a Things that make me happy book and taught her how to identify what she is feeling and evaluate the feeling.



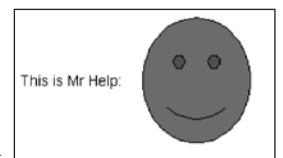
Explanation story happiness journal Facial Expression

Facial expression is also an area of weakness for people with autism. It is useful for the individual to be able to recognise that emotions look different. Some clues that we have found useful in supporting Tim how to read people's facial expression can include: looking at the person's mouth, looking at person's eyes and looking at person's posture



Mr Help

Mr. Help is a strategy that we developed to assist people manage confusions associated with misunderstandings, problem solving, thinking and reasoning. Tim has great difficulty in identifying what a problem is and how to make decisions accordingly. Mr Help is used to help Tim identify that a problem has occurred and then step-by-step, he works out how to solve it.



We have suggested a range of ideas to assist people with autism develop skills for social conversation. The development of these skills is not a goal or a destination within themselves. As a person's journey is constantly changing and evolving these strategies are only meaningful as long as they assist the person in their journey.

Time to Talk was co-written by Elizabeth Ponce, Ylana Bloom and Dolly Bhargava. It provides a background to Autism Spectrum Disorders and provides strategies to support conversation. There are many case studies provided to support the reader. The images used throughout this article are Softpics With FantasticPics (Innovative Communication Programming, Bloom and Bhargava (2001))



Supporting Social Skills ... (cont)

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AAC, the Arts...and Sport!

"Art is communication."

People everywhere express and receive messages through the arts. Creative works hang on walls of our houses, play on the radio, line our bookshelves, and show at local movie theatres. It is important to acknowledge the potential impact of the arts on the lives of AAC users. Music, painting, sculpture, writing, drama and dance convey a range of ideas, thoughts, and feelings. Often the arts can express emotional messages with more depth than traditional modes of communication. The arts can be important to all of us because they provide:

- A source of enjoyment
- A vehicle for self expression
- A means of escape from daily routines
- A way to relax
- Meaningful leisure activities
- Opportunities for socialisation
- An avenue to learn the experiences and feelings of others
- A forum to foster independent thought and divergent thinking
- Access to new experiences.

(John McCarthy in Augmentative Communication News Dec 1997)

For this reason AGOSCI In Focus would like to encourage artists (and sportspeople!) to contribute their works of art and articles related to their experiences of art or sport to the magazine in order to highlight creativity and expression of personality beyond the AAC interaction. There will be a \$50 payment for each item published so please forward your articles to the Editors. We are also on the lookout for artists to feature on our cover! (Payment is \$250). If you're interested please send the editors a photo of the artwork (high resolution jpeg, 300dpi, 10cm x 15cm), a short bio and a photo of yourself, the artist.



Spot the Difference:

Resources for building awareness of complex communication needs and AAC

*Kirstie Hay-Smith, Alison King, Isobel Lewis, Alisa Lingham, Annalice Madden, Monique Thompson and Laura Voigt. With Hilary Johnson and Karen Bloomberg
Supervisors, crc@scopevic.org.au*

“I’m a waitress at a local cafe. Today I went into work, but something was different. There were new purple table cloths, the clock had been moved, and instead of using speech a woman ordered her coffee by handing me a card that said “Hi, I would like a latte, please.” These aren’t such big differences? I don’t think so either.”

This is the relaxed attitude that we are hoping to create amongst the general public when they interact with people who use Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC). To help achieve this we developed resource materials which aim to increase the general public’s awareness of complex communication needs. These resource materials stemmed from images which depict five ‘spot the difference’ scenarios involving people using AAC in the community. The above anecdote describes one of the five images which was accompanied by the slogan “Not such big differences? We don’t think so either.”

The AAC awareness project resources were developed in 2006 as part of a final year group project for the Speech Pathology Bachelor Degree at La Trobe University. The project was completed in association with Scope Victoria and the Communication Resource Centre.

Project brief

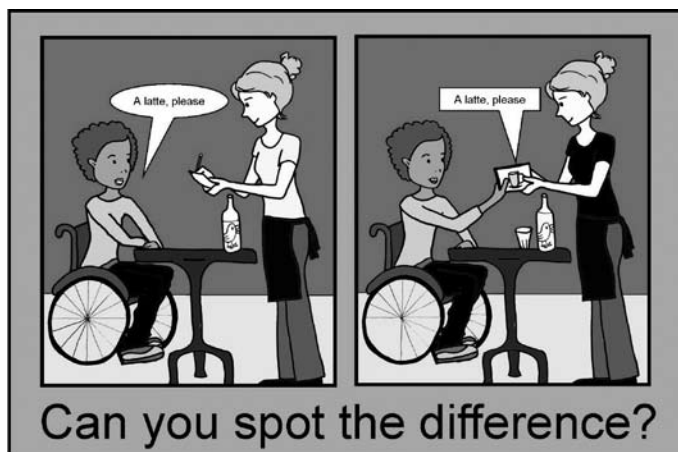
The project involved the development of resources for building awareness of complex communication needs. A literature review indicated that the public has limited knowledge and exposure to AAC. This suggested that there was a need for resources targeted to the general public. Due to limited time we developed the resources but did not implement an awareness campaign ourselves. We intended that an individual or an organisation could use the resources independently to promote AAC on a small scale.

Project contents

The AAC awareness project includes two aspects:

1. Awareness campaign material
2. Web-based fact sheets.

The two parts of the project were designed to be co-dependent. The awareness campaign material directs the public to the Scope website where they will be able to access the web-based fact-sheets. The fact sheets provide more in-depth educational information about AAC. The fact sheets will also contain a link to the printable awareness campaign material.



Awareness campaign material

The project group developed awareness campaign material consisting of a series of five images highlighting different forms of communication.

After much brainstorming our final idea for the material was based around the concept of colourful illustrations with a ‘spot the difference’ theme. In one example the person uses speech to convey their desired message whilst in a second they use AAC. The images are divided into two halves to depict these ‘spot the difference’ scenarios. Other minor differences are also altered in the picture to highlight that the form of communication is just another difference. On the back of the post card is the list of differences, including the difference of communication mode, accompanied by the slogan “Not such big differences? We don’t think so either.”

We developed five images in total. The images have been designed to portray people of varied gender, age, ethnic background, physical abilities and communication modes in an effort to represent the community as a whole. The characters within the images use the communication modes of speech, signing, an electronic voice output device, a headpointer for computer access, a communication board and a community request card. These images were composed into poster and postcard formats.



Spot the Difference (cont)

Web-based fact sheets

Twenty-seven printer-friendly fact sheets were produced including topics such as:

- AAC: What? Why? Who?
- AAC use with a range of specific disorders and disabilities (e.g. Cerebral Palsy, Autism Spectrum Disorders, etc)
- Aided and unaided AAC use
- Electronic and non-electronic communication aids
- Communicating with someone who uses AAC
- AAC: Defending your rights
- Links to other organisations and resources.

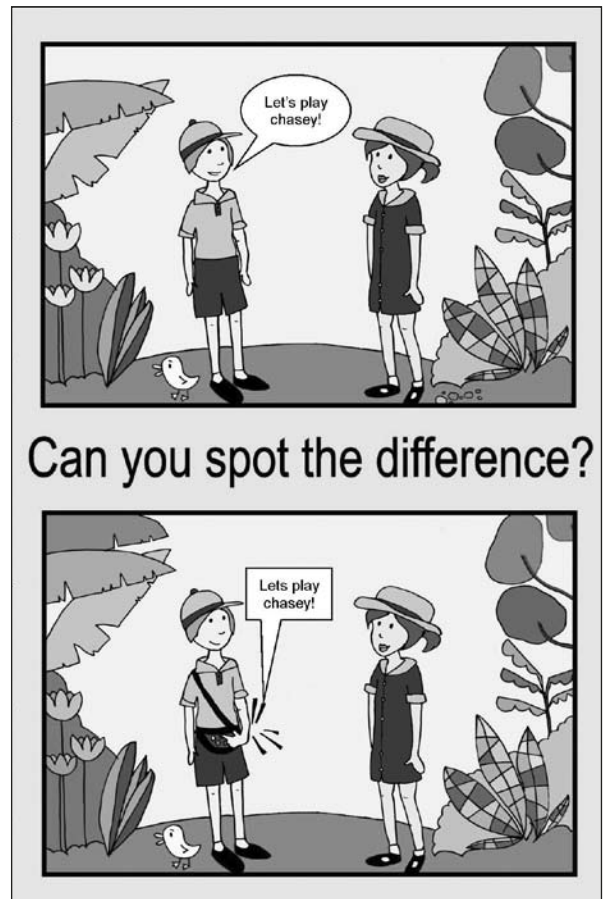
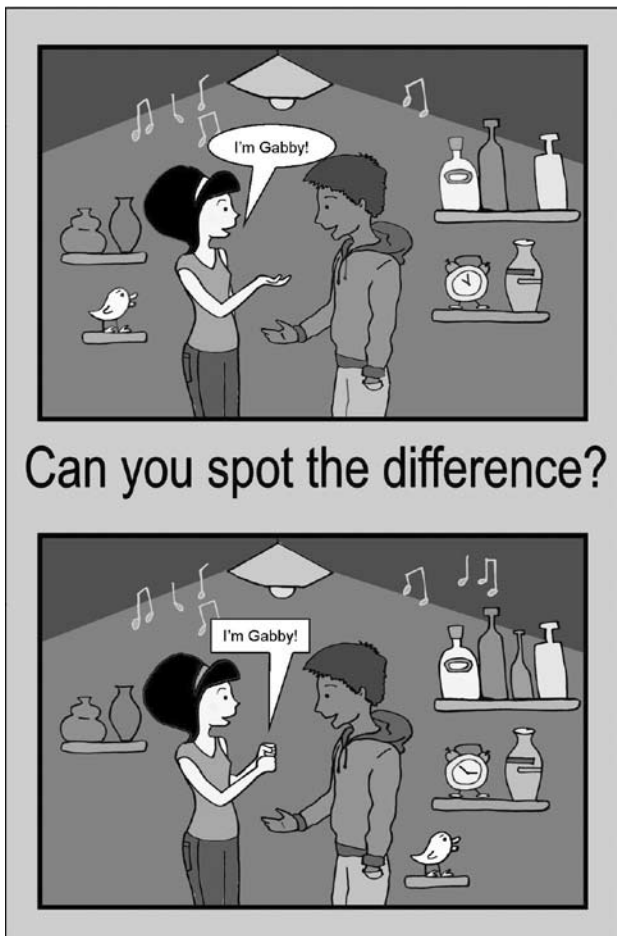
Initial implementation

Earlier this year the Communication Resource Centre received funding to print the postcard series. In August 2007, 11,000 postcards were printed and have since been distributed throughout the Victorian public library system, which includes 250 participating branches. You may have seen them in your travels.

Some ideas for implementation in your community:

- Put the posters up in your local business area, health clinics, school settings, etc.
- Give posters to your café or local sports centre (particularly those frequented by members of your school or organisation)
- Share with friends and family to enhance AAC knowledge
- Send as compliment or thank you cards
- Send postcards as Christmas greeting cards!

It has now been a year since our group finished work on the AAC awareness project. It has been wonderful to know that the project has continued to gain support from the Communication Resource Centre and Scope. Who knows what may happen to the images in the future?



Accessing resources

It is planned that AAC awareness project resources will be available on the Scope website: <http://www.scopevic.org.au>. However, the Scope website is currently being redeveloped and the fact sheets and awareness campaign images are still to be uploaded. Currently, if you wish to receive the posters, postcards or fact sheets you can contact the Communication Resource Centre directly and they will send you a print ready set (email: crc@scopevic.org.au).



Pittsburgh Employment Conference

by Meredith Allan

mmallan@netspace.net.au

Pittsburgh to sports fans is home to the Steelers, Pirates and Penguins. To industrialists and environmentalists, Pittsburgh is the former industrial city that was cleaned up and still is a financial centre for the United States. To medical researchers, Pittsburgh is the birthplace of the polio vaccine. To the arts community, it is the home of Andy Warhol. However, to the AAC community, Pittsburgh is the home of Bruce Baker and Bob Conti and the Pittsburgh Employment Conference (PEC).

PEC is unique in the AAC community in that the majority of delegates and speakers use AAC. I am sure there were lots of technology problems with devices, but I did not notice or remember, such as the environment and culture of PEC. The theme of this year's conference was "Employment and Planning for the Second Half of Life."

There was a tinge of sadness throughout the conference with a founding AAC member of PEC, Jim Prentice, suffering a brain stem stroke just prior to PEC. Jim died a few days later. The paper Jim was to present at PEC, "The passing of parents for a person who uses AAC", is printed in the conference papers and will be a reminder of the tenacity and wisdom of Jim.

Five Australians were at the conference, Sue Balandin, Monique Hines, Angela Dew, Bronwyn Hemsley and I. We were jet lagged as usual, and each morning compared sleeping patterns.

At lunch on the first day, people were still talking about the paper on Trusts. It was a practical paper on how to set up a Trust so that government benefits would not be affected. Naturally there were state and country variances to be considered. It outlined the things the Trust income could and could not be used for eg. one person uses their Trust income to buy a season ticket to the ice hockey for themselves and their personal care assistant. It improves the quality of life but does not infringe on the disability support supplement (DSS) (pension).

It all became very complicated, the Trust income could not be used to supplement the DSS and it had to have specific purpose. Clothes was a contentious issue, clothes are a necessitous item that would be covered by the DSS but if a person's disability made them susceptible to the cold for example and they needed extra clothing every year, the Trust income could be used for the specific clothing. It would be interesting to find out about Trusts in Australia and how they work.

PEC had a session, facilitated by Bruce Baker, on developing a vocabulary for hospital situations. It was very scary as people told stories of having their devices removed from them. Unfortunately a few days later in New York I was to test the US hospital system for myself. Luckily, it was nothing like the scenarios presented in the forum.

I had hit my head on a ledge in the foyer of the hotel. Hotel staff, scared of litigation, called the ambulance. Although another hotel guest was continually screaming "She's Deaf", both the hotel staff and the paramedics treated me calmly and with dignity. The ambulance took me to the "cuts and bruises"

section of the hospital rather than Emergency. The doctor in triage was relieved when she found out I used the Lightwriter and she didn't have to use it- it was her first day back from vacation. I had stitches put in and was back at the hotel within the hour. The nurse even flagged a taxi for me. I am now left with the insurance claim forms.....

The PEC Dinner on the Saturday night was held at Semantic Compaction's parking lot- it was a great site, right next to the light rail station and totally accessible. We each put in \$1 for the \$162 million state lottery, on the proviso that we each give \$10,000 to SHOUT (Support Helps Others Use Technology) if we won, we did not win though.

While I am on the topic of SHOUT, PEC's overseeing body, it finally has a new website, one you can actually find and it is www.shoutaac.org. Congratulations must go to SHOUT board member, Beth Anne Luciani and web designer, Robert O'Gurek. Both Beth Anne and Bobby are tremendously talented and use AAC, the leadership in AAC looks very bright.

Probably the most emotive presentation was given by Rick Holn, as he gave us a glimpse of his journey through life, striving for education, independence, marriage, death of his mother, his faith, reconciliation with his father and the provision he is making for the future. Rick has bought a trailer for his golden years.

Other speakers did not see themselves retiring. They had worked very hard to get where they are, and were finally enjoying a productive life and were not going to slow down. Watching all the younger members of the AAC community listen and interact and listen to the older members, it only gives one hope for the younger members' future.

When we reached Sunday morning, we were all tired but the morning was no more relaxing as we heard of Gulf War soldiers having a higher incidence of Lou Gerhigs disease (Motor Neurone Disease) and the US Government's lack of funding for speech generating devices.

We were already for fun and the presentation on outdoor recreation for everyone certainly gave us that. Tents with wheelchair openings, electric socks, adaptable bicycles, sail boats, beach wheelchairs, and switch activated fishing rods gave us 30 minutes of possibilities. Dianne Goodwin of Blue Sky designs deserves mention for her enthusiasm and absolute love of the outdoors. You can see more on her website www.blueskydesigns.us.

So, would I go to PEC again? Given the expense, my time and my body, I do not think I will be able to go again. Every AAC user should have the opportunity to attend PEC once in their lifetime just for the opportunity of seeing just how great the AAC community is and to have dynamic interaction on a massive scale, and you have to see the Andy Warhol Museum. However one has to be prepared to enter the American Culture, accept the rigid.



Chattercamp at the Movies, NSW

Getting Started For Chattercamp 2007

by Jane Adams and Nathenya Fall

Speech Pathologists – The Spastic Centre

and Gretta Serov

School student and Vanguard user

2007 was a very exciting year in NSW as we ran our very first AAC camp. "ChatterCamp" was held over 4 days at Camp Breakaway, a fully accessible 25 acre property at San Remo, on the beautiful Central Coast of NSW.

The speech pathologists at The Spastic Centre had long been inspired by the AAC camps run in other states and we felt that it was time to consider such an event for the children of NSW. The Spastic Centre sent a speech pathologist on a mission to Camp Have a Chat in Brisbane in 2006, to find out how an AAC camp is run and how an AAC camp might benefit Speech Generating Device (SGD) users in NSW. Using the information available from other camps, we put forward a proposal to hold an AAC camp in NSW in 2007. We were lucky enough to have a generous donation from ING Australia (fund managers, life insurers and superannuation providers) allocated towards funding the camp and before we knew it we were on our way to planning ChatterCamp 2007!

In the initial stages of planning the camp, we were fortunate to have the support and wisdom of some veteran camp planners, namely Wendy Webster (Camp Have a Chat) and Jane Farrall (Big Mouth Camp). We also used resources such as the Camp Cookbook by Gail Van Tatenhove, to give us an idea of where to start.

ChatterCamp was organised by staff from all corners of The Spastic Centre. While many speech pathologists were involved, we also had staff from technology services, human resources, management and administration roles. This gave us a broad range of experience to draw on, particularly in managing the logistics of putting on such a large event.

Lights, Camera, Action!

From October 4th- 7th 2007, 12 campers (SGD users) descended on the camp site with their parents and siblings. Families arrived over lunch time, with each child walking the red carpet as their introduction to the ChatterCamp theme – "At The Movies". The children were pretty pleased to be met at the entrance by some special guests (Snow White, a fairy princess, and Harry Potter!).

After travelling from as far north as Glen Innes, as far south as Moruya, and as far west as Mudgee, families had some time to settle in to the surroundings and take part in site visits to find out all that the camp site had to offer (including a Liberty Swing, tennis court, and putt putt golf!). They were also shown where the "Tech Tent" was, so that at any stage during the camp they could access support from our device experts. The Tech Tent was staffed by Jane Farrall from Spectronics, and Adam Lynn from Technability. Speech pathologists were also on hand in this room to provide advice on programming devices, vocabulary selection and other handy tips and tricks. The 12 campers, or 'stars', were aged between 5 and 16 years. Each star used a dynamic display speech generating device as their primary means of communication. Devices included two e-talks, a Vantage, a Vanguard, two Pathfinders, two MT4s, three DV4's and a temperamental DynaVox 3100, which as it was wanted to do died and ended up with its user trialling Jane Farrall's hot pink Vmax! Along with the stars, we had 16 'cast' members (siblings) and their 'entourage' (parents and carers). Throughout the 3 ½ days at camp, the campers and their families participated in a wide range of fun and functional activities designed to increase their communicative competence. Parents participated in training workshops and had some time available to seek individual advice or training. Many of the activities were designed for the whole family, such as drama and drumming workshops, with the campers given opportunities to use their devices throughout the activities.

Mealtimes were also a highlight, with our fantastic chefs whipping up delights for every meal. Who would have thought that camp food could taste so good!? Not to mention the mealtime entertainment where an array of funny and not-so-funny jokes were shared by the campers... you will never guess what is brown and sticky?

In addition to the food and the jokes, highlights from the camp included a trivia night on the first evening. Naturally, fitting with the theme, it was movie trivia and much to our delight it was hosted by Paris Hilton's classy sister! Drama workshops culminated in award winning performances at the family concert on the third night and the camp was wrapped up on Sunday afternoon with an Oscars ceremony complete with awards, speeches and glam attire.

Rather than spending too much time trying to convince you how fabulous the camp experience was from a staff perspective, we thought it was best to read about it from the pen of one of our Stars who attended ChatterCamp... Introducing



ChatterCamp
At the Movies



Chattercamp NSW (cont)

Miss Gretta Serov:

Hi my name is Gretta and I'm sixteen. I use a communication device called the Vanguard because I suffer from cerebral palsy. Just a few weeks ago I went to ChatterCamp with my mum, boyfriend and our friend. While we were there we had an awesome time.

We learnt heaps and had a lot of fun but the best thing was the friendships we made with the families and therapists. Having Adam and Jane on site meant that if we had any problems or questions they were fixed and answered straight away. But chatting wasn't all we did. We had a trivia night, movie night and best of all we put on a play following drama lessons. The cast included campers and siblings and everyone got right into it. At lunch on our last day we had our red carpet awards. It was so much fun. Everyone got a mention.

We also went on a Jurassic Park adventure, joined a drumming workshop and had communication workshops in the mornings while siblings had their own fun and parents attended workshops

on how to help us communicate more effectively. Angie who is in her twenties and uses a Pathfinder to communicate talked with parents and mentored us. She was cool and had heaps of great ideas.

The crew (Spastic Centre Staff) did an amazing job and I feel sorry for all those who missed the camp because it was awesome. If you get the chance definitely go, as its great and I'm using my Vanguard much better now due to all the help and encouragement I got.

PS The food was also fantastic and the accommodation really good.

Where to from here?

The outcomes of ChatterCamp 2007 are being formally evaluated through a research project approved by The Spastic Centre Human Research Ethics Committee. The results of this research will be disseminated as soon as possible. We are hoping to be able to run another camp in 2008.



Big Mouth Camp, Victoria

The Big Mouth Camp did not run in 2007. But will be running full steam ahead in 2008 from the 19th to 23rd of September.

For more information please contact Jane Farrall on jane@goughhughes.net





Camp Have a Chat, Queensland

by Meg Hinselwood
Coordinator, Camp Have a Chat

The Cerebral Palsy League of Queensland hosted its annual camp, Camp Have a Chat, in the first week of October, at Margate Conference Centre on the Redcliffe Peninsula. Camp Have a Chat, which takes place across three days and four nights, is a camp for children who use speech generating devices, their carers and supporting therapists. Camp is jointly funded by the Commonwealth Special Education Programme Non-School Organisations 2007, and Allens Arthur Robinson Charity Fund.

Camp employs two community artists to develop and present a programme of activities for the children, based around a central theme. Past years' themes have included 'Journey with Imagination' and 'Connexions'. This year's theme was 'The? Circus'. A circus was presented as a place comprised of people whose skills and characters are exaggerated and celebrated, and who function together as a team. The 16 students, aged between 6 and 17 years, were asked prior to Camp to reflect on the circus character with whom they best identified and to think about the elements of that character that they would like to develop and strengthen in themselves. Visual and dramatic art activities conducted by artists Tamara Kirby from Struth Arts and Scotia Monkivitch from Helicon Dance, allowed them to develop this character further including constructing a costume and working on a circus character script in preparation for a presentation to parents and friends on the last day of Camp. Together the students named their circus 'The Crazy, Wild, Circus Quirkus'. Many of the photos here show the culmination of the week: Thursday's circus performance. Each student designed and constructed a costume to suit their character, along with a script describing their character and its strengths. It was a wonderfully fun and vibrant way to bring the week to a close, and was vastly enjoyed by performers and audience alike.



Kate, the cool tightrope walker in the parade.

Camp Have a Chat aims to encourage students with complex communication needs to explore their creativity and personality using the Arts. Artists and Camp organisers meet several times prior to Camp to determine what vocabulary will be necessary to support the students' participation in the activities, and develop a communication book, copies of which are subsequently produced by the League's Communication Board Service and provided to each participant. Students who use versions of Unity have specialised sheets with Unity icons instead of the PCS symbols as are pictured in the menu page example below.



Along with the student goals, Camp aims to bring together a community of people who are interested in and committed to supporting students who use augmentative and alternative communication. Each student must be accompanied to Camp by a parent or guardian who is interested in his or her communication. The students' primary therapist/s are invited, and teachers are also encouraged to attend: in this way many informal opportunities are created to build strong and supportive networks. Representatives from companies that supply and service speech-generating devices attend Camp and provide product displays and in-services. Senior therapists from the League's Technology Unit are also on hand for some of the time to help problem solve issues around technology and access.

A highlight of the Camp this year was the Wednesday night beach ritual. Students assembled around the boat ramp at Margate beach at dusk, looking down on the sandcastles they had built earlier that afternoon. A candle was placed on



Camp Have a Chat, Queensland (cont)

top of each sandcastle, and a streamer was passed from each candle to a student, physically linking the children with what was happening on the beach. Wishes that students had earlier written on pieces of paper were ceremoniously burned on the beach, following which three fire sticks simultaneously lit a fire rope drawing, and the words 'sky full of wishes' were illuminated against the backdrop of the sea. What a magical event!



Mac delivers his character's script.

It is with great sadness that we say farewell to the Margate Conference Centre this year, as it is to be sold by the Uniting Church. It will be a challenge to find a suitable replacement able to accommodate the vast numbers of people it takes to make this wonderful Camp a reality for our students. We will miss the proximity to the beach and the lovely welcome provided by the community in Margate, but look forward to exploring the opportunities provided by a new venue in another exciting location.



Ben in the circus parade.

What parents said about Camp Have a Chat:

- "We came to Camp to learn and see how children use and what they use in AAC. This was really achieved. Mac enjoyed Camp, his inclusion and interaction far surpassed my hopes."
- "I have found available information very valuable and will continue to try to improve communication skills."
- "It was great to talk to the different company representatives and to have the opportunity for me and Nicole to try out different devices. Nicole had a fantastic time socialising with all the kids and adults at Camp."

What professionals said about Camp Have a Chat:

"Camp has been a great opportunity to improve my skills and knowledge about my students' speech output devices. The professional support by the CPLQ Technology Unit and speech therapists has been extremely helpful. Product displays and support by suppliers has also been helpful. Camp is more beneficial to me in my role of teaching children to use AAC than any other conference or in-service".

If you would like further information about Camp Have a Chat 2008, please watch our website at <http://www.cplqld.org.au/services/camphaveachat> or e-mail the coordinator at mhinselwood@cplqld.org.au

Spread the word ...



Let users of AAC
and their families know about AGOSCI

Download a membership form
from the internet

www.agosci.org.au



Camp Yackey Yack, South Australia

by Janelle Sampson

Camp Yackey Yack Coordinator, Novita Children's Services

Well, it's over for another year. I have that feeling of sadness that it's all over, topped with satisfaction and also relief. Not to mention pride in the kids, families and amazing staff who helped to make Camp Yackey Yack 2007 a huge success and a whole load of fun. It's a special thing to have a job that makes you feel like you've really made a difference and to have such a blast doing it. As I'm sure I said in last year's report, if you are thinking or running a camp, it's a lot of work but worth every minute of it. This year our camp numbers had exploded. 6 out of 7 returned from last year, and 8 newbies signed up to come. This meant a whole new take on accommodation and planning. Camp Yackey Yack ran from 26th – 29th of October 2007 (Friday night til Monday lunchtime) at Mylor Baptist Camp. The 14 clients of Novita Children's Services who attended were aged between 5 and 18 years old. The campers all have complex communication needs (CCN) and the wide range of communication devices used by the clients includes: Pathfinders, Vantages, an Emu, a Chat PC, a Mercury, a Hip talk, and a Tango, as well as low-tech options. The camp was made possible by the hugely successful "I swear by 891" campaign in which the local ABC radio station got behind our kids and our camp to encourage workplaces to host a 'swear jar'.



The whole group

At camp there were activities targeted to clients, siblings, and parents/carers. There is so much to talk about but I'll try to be brief and list only the major highlights.

Number one highlight for me has to be the amount of interaction between the kids. One of the staff noted on the first night that there had been more conversations between the kids already than during the whole camp last year. Last year, our first camp, the kids were just getting to know each other. This year they just knew what it was all about and couldn't wait to get chatting. The newbies also just seemed to slot in to the way things were.



Pyjama party

There was one especially great time during the weekend when I quite honestly wished they would "shut up". Every camper was allocated to a team with points awarded for various things throughout the weekend. After breakfast each day we would ask campers if anyone deserved points for anything. Well, if you want to motivate kids to communicate, just add a little competition and there's no stopping them. I thought we'd never get on with the days activities with all of the reasons they were telling me they deserved points.

Another highlight was the boat race. Each team had to create a boat that they could float down the river at Sunday's race. (That is without passengers.) We had set up an area called 'The Shed' as a place to create things. Again, a little dose of competition and it got out of control. The kids demanded the "best" boat (although I'm not sure it was just the kids). One team even created an aircraft carrier, another a luxury cruise liner (complete with pool and palm trees). The excitement built as we launched the boats into the creek then raced downstream to watch the finish. Through cheers and jeers to the other teams, the purple boat pulled ahead to cross the line first.

Dream Flags –With the help of scripting and visual supports as needed, each child told us their dream based on the concept developed by Diane Bryen from Augmentative Communication and Empowerment Supports (ACES). The children then told their dreams to Mark Timberlake (community artist from KneeHigh) who drew them in cartoon form onto a flag that the children later decorated.

Some of the dreams included:

"I want to dance all day with my mum" (S.F. aged 5);

"I want to be like James Bond" (C.To. aged 14);

"I want to be a fashion designer in New York with my friends" (A.W. aged 13).

A special request from the teenage kids this year was movie night. Several of the kids asked for the opportunity to have a pyjama party and watch movies together. So we set up one



Camp Yackey Yack, South Australia (cont)

of the rooms with couches, mattresses and bean bags for the movie with only one rule: PJs required. Once settled, we left them to it with only 1 staff member who hung in the background and was only there if needed. The room was like a human carpet of kids in PJs and they loved it. The younger kids had a similar set up but most of them fell asleep 5 minutes into the movie. With pre-made catapults and a busload of water bombs, the kids shot at human targets to score points for their team. The weather was colder than we would have liked but it still didn't dampen the fun.



Writing a dream

A huge hit for the kids was mug making. One of our staff members has a machine for putting personalized designs on mugs and each family group created a mug with photos, drawings or anything else they chose.

We were lucky enough this year to have a special drop-in guest: Bruce Baker. Bruce gave 2 presentations: one on employment options for people with CCN, and another on using Minspeak and core words. These were attended by the older children and their parents with rave reviews.



The blue team boat

Adult Mentor – once again this was an invaluable part of the camp. Cameron West, a Victorian import, was again popular with the kids and families and many parents comment that seeing and talking to Cam helps them to look ahead to their child's future.



Launching the boat

So, given the numbers and the wide range of ages and abilities, this year's formula was a little different to last year. With the exception of a few programmed group events, the aim was to set up activities and work areas for people to choose what they preferred to do. Some spent a lot of time in one place, others rushed to "do everything."

Other changes this year were the addition of some designated staff training time before camp and allowing some children to visit for the day rather than the whole camp. Some families were, at first, not sure about attending the whole camp and we didn't want to push them. Of course, those who planned to visit only one day also came back the next day. Hopefully next year they'll be back full time. The staff training was well received and increased the confidence of all to become communication crusaders for the weekend.

So, that's it for now. I could go on forever with more and more stories but just thought I'd end with one of my favourite quotes from the weekend. Two of our older 'teens' met at the last camp and have seen each other several times throughout the year at Club Yackey Yack events. They are developing a great friendship. One said to the other "We are brothers from different families."

As for next year - nothing is definite yet in terms of funding but we will find a way! So, until then ...



A Makaton CAT

(Critically Appraised Topic)

by Harriet Korner

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In 2006 speech pathologists at The Spastic Centre of NSW (TSC) decided to complete a critically appraised topic (CAT) on the use of Makaton as an intervention for children with complex communication needs. Clinical experience has supported the use of Makaton as a communication intervention for many children and adults with complex communication needs since it was first introduced in the 1970's. Many articles have been published on this topic. Makaton, an approach to key word signing where signs are used concurrently with speech, is implemented in Australia through Makaton Australia, which coordinates resources, training of presenters and Basic Makaton Workshops for families and service providers.

TSC provides services to children and adults with cerebral palsy, and more recently to school aged children with significant and complex needs, including children with autism and Down syndrome. Clinical caseload diaries completed by TSC speech pathologists in 2004 indicated that these three groups made up the majority of TSC speech pathologists' caseloads. It was appropriate to consider the effectiveness of Makaton/ key word signing with each of these clinical populations.

In 2006, 11 Speech Pathologists were trained as Makaton Presenters in NSW/ACT and more than 16 Basic Makaton Workshops were run in NSW/ACT by TSC. It was timely to complete a CAT to examine the quality of current research supporting the use of Makaton and to identify any gaps in the literature for further research to assist in advancing clinical practice.

A CAT is a summary of the current evidence related to a focused clinical question. It is based on a search and critical appraisal of the literature. Once a question is developed the published research is searched for articles that address the clinical question. Articles which are relevant and have a robust study design are reviewed individually by completing a critically appraised paper (CAP). A CAT enables reviewers to synthesise the research from the included studies to draw out key findings and develop a clinical bottom line. A CAT aims to create a concise summary of best evidence most central for a specific clinical scenario (Wendt, 2006).

A CAT is not the same as a systematic review of the literature. A systematic review attempts to take in all the research and has a wider scope. A systematic review is a "critical, in-depth assessment and evaluation of existing research using methods

to reduce likelihood of bias; and provide an overview on current research base" (Wendt, 2006, p1).

It is important to recognize the difference between these; a CAT is a valuable tool in helping to consider the evidence in relation to clinical practice, and a specific clinical question. A systematic review is a more rigorous process, with a wider scale of investigation.

“**A CAT enables reviewers to synthesise the research from the included studies to draw out key findings and develop a clinical bottom line.**”

The focused clinical question we asked for our CAT was: What is the efficacy of Makaton or key word signing to develop communication for people who have cerebral palsy, autism or Down syndrome?

Terms used to guide our search strategy and data bases searched are outlined in the table below.

DATABASE & SITES SEARCHED	SEARCH TERMS
Pubmed	Patient/Client: cerebral pals*; autism*; downs syndrome;
Ovid	paediatric; child*; disabl*; non verbal; handicap*; communicat*;
Web of Science	impair*; disord* .
Hand searches	Intervention: Makaton; key + word + sign; sign*; signing; expressive sign language. Comparison: Nil Outcome(s): efficac*; effect*; communicat*. Pubmed - Search 2, used the first three "P" terms & the first three "I" terms only and proved more effective. <i>Note: The *asterisk is used in the search to include different work endings such as communication, communicative and so on.</i>

Table 1: Terms Used to Guide our Search Strategy and Databases Searched.



A Makaton CAT (cont)

Inclusion Criteria: Articles needed to relate to:

- Makaton, key word signing, manual sign with speech or gesture with speech
- Developing a communication intervention
- At least one of the following: cerebral palsy, autism spectrum disorder, Down syndrome, developmental disorder or equivalent terms or related terms

Articles were graded according to Sackett's rules of evidence, (2000), adapted by TSC. Articles needed to be at least Level 5, case studies, and above, published in a refereed journal, or unpublished MS/Doctoral thesis and written in English.

Exclusion Criteria: Articles were excluded where:

- The only intervention was sign alone (no speech was used)
- They were literature reviews, summaries of the literature, but not involving a documented, systematic method.
- They were historical accounts
- They were expert opinion or conference papers
- They related to training programs for staff in using Makaton
- They were not written in English.

One article by Launonen (1998), was included initially until we realised this was a conference paper and the original article was not published in English. As the overall key findings were not changed whether this study was included or not, we decided to exclude this study, even though it did provide support for key word signing and had some other interesting results. It has been included as an appendix in our CAT and it may be included fully when the CAT is reviewed.

Results

Fifty-four articles were collected from the initial searches and hand searches. Eighteen of these articles met our inclusion criteria and were categorised as shown in Table 2.

LEVEL OF EVIDENCE	STUDY DESIGN / METHODOLOGY OF ARTICLES RETRIEVED	NUMBER LOCATED	SOURCE(S)
Level I	Randomised controlled trial	2	Handsearch
Level II	Small randomised trials	0	
Level III	Non-randomised comparative study (Kay-Raining Bird, Gaskell, Babineau, Macdonald, 2000) Before and after design (Hurd, 1995) These studies were non randomised but with contemporaneous controls	2	Pubmed Handsearch
Level IV	Non randomised with historical controls	0	
Level V	Case study design/ case series	14	Pubmed, Ovid, Handsearches

Table 2:
Summary of Study Designs of Articles Retrieved.

The complete Makaton CAT includes a summary of the best evidence for the strongest articles appraised and is available from the TSC speech pathology consultant.

Overall key findings were that:

- the combined speech and sign condition had no negative effects on speech and did not stop children from developing speech (Yoder & Layton, 1988).
- children who were high verbal imitators did not seem to benefit from combined speech and sign, but it did not harm them either (Layton, 1988; Yoder & Layton 1988).
- speech alone is not as effective as simultaneous speech and sign for children with low verbal imitation skills and comprehension difficulties (Layton, 1988 Kay-Raining Bird et al, 2000).
- sign alone is not as effective as simultaneous speech and sign for developing speech production (Yoder & Layton, 1988).



What is the efficacy of Makaton or key word signing to develop communication for people who have cerebral palsy, autism or Down syndrome?



Makaton / key word signing:

- may help focus attention (Hurd, 1995).
- varies in being the mode of communication which is best for individuals (Udwin & Yule, 1990, 1991).
- should be used consistently across all environments to aid generalisation (Udwin & Yule, 1991).
- needs to meet children's current vocabulary requirements and needs to provide opportunities for expanding that vocabulary, to be effective as a communication intervention (Udwin & Yule, 1991).

Clinical Bottom Line

Makaton, using speech and key word signing together, is supported as a communication intervention for children with cerebral palsy, autism and Down syndrome.

Future Directions

The following are suggested as topics for future research:

- Effectiveness of the Interactive Vocabulary for introducing Makaton / key word signing
- Most effective techniques for teaching Makaton/ key word signing
- What are the key factors for successful generalization at home, school and in the community?
- Effectiveness of group vs individual Makaton intervention
- Investigating the relationship between early intervention using key word signing and literacy development.



A Makaton CAT (cont)

The Interactive vocabulary (Brownlie, 1999) is now widely used for introducing the Makaton vocabulary. It would be very helpful if the efficacy of this could be examined. Using the interactive vocabulary is congruent with TSC speech pathologists' clinical experience and other recommended practices such as aided language stimulation with the rationale of using a core vocabulary with highly motivating and immediately functional communication messages. It meets the need to provide people with complex communication needs with key words which can apply across a range of everyday activities and situations.

The suggestion in regard to literacy development was another interesting finding from the Launonen (1998) conference paper. The 8-year study found there was a positive correlation between the early key word signing intervention and the development of literacy skills in the subjects in this study. It would be interesting to further investigate the impact of key word signing in facilitating language and literacy development in children.

Conclusion

Makaton is now being used more widely throughout TSC. Within TSC there is support for Makaton resources to be purchased to assist in implementation of Makaton in accommodation, community access, and respite services, as well as in our adult and children's services teams. Five more TSC staff were trained as Makaton Presenters in 2007. Basic Makaton workshops, with either an adult or a child focus, are now being offered to families, our own staff, and professionals from external organisations across our rural and metropolitan regions. A parent summary of this CAT will be available on our TSC website for interested families and professionals. We intend to have it peer reviewed and will review and update it again as new research becomes available. It is hoped that this might provide some inspiration for future research projects.

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Multimedia Resources Related to ASD

by Mandy Williams and Susan Fowler

mwilliams.crc@scopevic.org.au & sfowler@scopevic.org.au

The following was published in the recent ECAPSS Newsletter http://www.scopevic.org.au/therapy_crc_r&p_ecapss.html and reproduced with permission from the authors. Mandy and Susan are highly respected Occupational Therapists working with adults with disabilities and their teams. Their reviews share resources that expand practitioner's understanding of the sensory worlds of people with autism.

Michael Moon - Music

I recently attended the Come To Your Senses Conference 2007, in Toronto, Canada. The conference theme was Opening the Sensory World to Children and Adults with Complex Disabilities. I presented a one-day pre-conference workshop: A Sensory-focused Banquet: Ingredients for individualised sensory-focused activities for adults who are unintentional or early intentional communicators. Michael Moon co-presented during the first session of this workshop. Michael, an award winning musician and artist, was able to share his experiences of growing up with autism. He clearly described his sensory processing difficulties and the impact they have had on his life. He also shared the strategies he has developed to address these issues. As a result these difficulties have turned into what Michael describes as a "connection with the outside world."

Michael has developed five CDs. A DVD is included with the Deep Peace CD pack. Michael's music and photographs are described as "reflecting the depth and sensitivity to detail of the autistic mind. They are designed to create a 'safe space' through sound, and his photography is an exceptional window into the way an autistic person sees the world." The DVD is ideal for assisting relaxation in many environments, for example, dentist's surgeries, yoga, quiet spaces in residential and adult day services, and multisensory environments. The pictures are fantastic when projected onto a screen or wall.

For further information, to listen to samples, and to order copies of the CDs visit www.thetempleofsound.com.

Song of the Gorilla Nation - Book

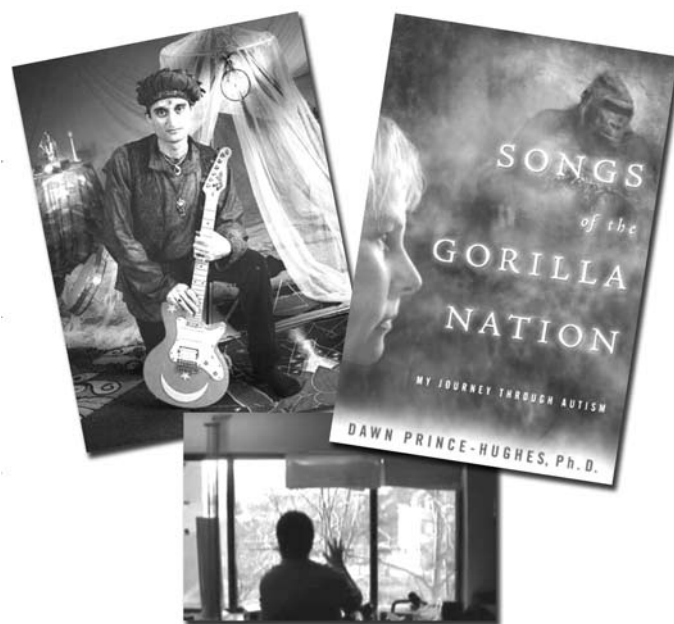
Prince-Hughes, D. (2004). *Songs of the gorilla nation: My journey through autism*. NY: Harmony Books.

Dawn is an Adjunct Professor of Anthropology at Western Washington University. This book describes Dawn's struggles throughout her life to identify "what parts of my autism are disabilities and which parts are gifts." Dawn's experiences when working with and studying gorillas at the Woodland Park Zoo, Seattle, enabled her to learn about and to connect emotionally with other living beings. Once started, this book is hard to put down!

In My Language - Video

silentmiaow / Amanda Baggs (Director). (2006). *In my language* [video]. Retrieved January 1, 2007 from <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JnylMlh12jc>

I recently came across this link on Youtube called In My



Language. It is definitely worth watching and gets you thinking about: (i) what exactly is communication and, (ii) what do we value as communication.

In *My Language* is a short video (about 8 minutes) about Amanda Baggs, a woman with autism. The video starts with the Amanda vocalizing, rocking, and waving her fingers. It also shows her exploring her world using her different senses, for example, tapping her foot on a pedal, rubbing her fingers along a rough surface, flapping a piece of paper, rolling her fingers around a drawer handle, and rubbing her face in a magazine.

The second part of the video is called a translation. Amanda explains, using a voice output device, that what we have seen is her talking in her native language. It is about her being in a "constant conversation with every aspect of my environment reacting physically to all parts of my surroundings." She smells things, listens to things, tastes things, feel things, and looks at things. The way she moves is an ongoing response to what is around her and this is her language. However, we regard her movements as purposeless and do not recognise her language. It is not until she talks to us in our language, that is, words, that we listen and consider her as having communication. She is seen as being non-communicative, however, we are not considered non-communicative if we do not speak her language, and in fact think her language does not exist.

Amanda comments that her failure to learn our language is seen as a deficit; but our failure to learn her language is seen as so natural that we don't recognise that people like her are communicating. In fact, she says that they are considered as non-persons because the way they think and interact is so unusual. They are seen as mysterious and puzzling, however, it is us who are confused.

She finishes by saying that the video is a "statement on the existence and value of different ways of thinking and interacting" and it is "only when all the different shapes of personhood are recognised will justice and human rights be possible"

Highly recommended viewing!



Look Me in the Eye

Look me in the eye: my life with Asperger's

Robison, J. E. (2007). North Sydney: Bantum.

Reviewed by Sheridan Forster – sheridanf@yahoo.com



With me, though, there is no external sign that I am conversationally handicapped. So folks hear some conversational misstep and say, "What an arrogant jerk!" I look forward to the day when my handicap will afford me the same respect accorded to a guy in a wheelchair. And if the respect comes with a preferred parking space, I won't turn it down. *Woof!* (p. 194)

Look me in the eye, a memoir by John Elder Robison, is a book sure to add to any reader's understanding of Autism Spectrum Disorders. Unlike, *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night*, which is a palatable, while educating, story written to engage the reader, Robison's memoir is a unabashed eye opener to the texture's of life for a person late-diagnosed with Asperger's.

Robison begins the book with a prologue, opening with "'Look me in the eye, young man!' I cannot tell you how many times I have heard that shrill, whining refrain" (p. 1). He gives a brief overview of Asperger's as a diagnosis, but then does not address Asperger's explicitly until much later in the book until, when as a 40 year old adult, he receives a formal diagnosis. The story begins with his reflections as a three year old when his first playmate moved away. Robison describes how he whacked his playmate because his playmate couldn't "get it right" in playing with dirt. From here continues the journey of mishaps and misunderstandings.

In childhood, Robison finds his way in being a "trickster." At times reading of his tricks can be humorous (like the flaming washtub), at times bewildering (as he gets his brother lost), and at other times painful as his actions seem cruel. As he grows he learns other things that he can be good at "For the first time in my life, I was able to do something that grown-ups thought was valuable" (p. 67). His knowledge / obsessions with radios and amplifiers results in him, as a young adult, working on sound systems for bands like Kiss and Talking Heads and being the creator of smoking guitars.

The memoir continues through Robison's adulthood as his dysfunctional (and often disturbing) family is added to through having his own son and relationships. Robison's descriptions of relationships are completely enlightening. He is aware of his difficulty with small talk and the strange logic (or lack of logic) that seems to rule small-talk. He writes frankly about his concern about whether he has selected the best Unit when discussing his marriage, but also shares with the reader the strategies that he believes his wife uses to help make the relationship successful. Robison adamantly describes that, in contrast to the commonly held belief that a person with autism is happy in a world of their own, he did not ever want to be on his own. He describes how having enough satisfactory exchanges with intelligent grown-ups helped him to sustain a desire to interact. Robison writes "I can

“Above all, I hope this book demonstrates once and for all that however robotic we Aspergians might seem, we do have deep emotions.”

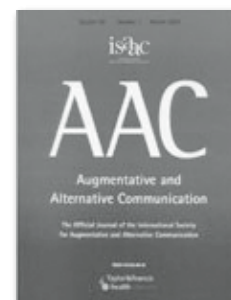
(Author's Note)

easily imagine a child who did not have any satisfying exchanges withdrawing from people entirely" (p. 208).

There are many different ways that we can learn about autism. We can learn from researchers, text-books, the experience of practitioners, and from people with autism themselves. Robison both implicitly and explicitly provides the reader with an opportunity to learn about the motives, experience, rationales, and the textures of life for one person, who happens to be Aspergian.

AAC - ISAAC's Professional Peer Reviewed Journal

Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) is the official journal of the International Society for Augmentative and Alternative Communication (ISAAC), published quarterly. AAC publishes original articles with direct application to the communication needs of persons with severe speech and/or communication impairments for whom augmentative and alternative communication techniques and systems may be of assistance.



If you are interested in subscribing to this journal, please see the information in the ISAAC Membership forms, included with this edition.



Writing an Article for AGOSCI

AGOSCI *In Focus* is published twice a year in May and November.

Articles in AGOSCI *In Focus* should inform others about all areas of complex communication needs. We particularly encourage articles on augmentative communication, literacy, mealtimes and saliva control. And submissions for our AAC, the Arts and Sport Section (see page 25 for more details). Articles may be in the form of research, personal stories, artworks, conference reports, video, book and technology reviews and great ideas. Generally we have a theme for each issue.

Upcoming Issues

You are encouraged to submit articles with the theme in mind. The theme for the May 2008 issue is 'Being a Good Communication Partner'.

However, we also have regular articles such as reviews. If you want to write an article feel free to contact the editor and talk about it. Before you write an article please consider the following style tips. Adhering to the style requirements will make the article easier for the reviewers to read and more likely to get printed!

General

The articles that you submit must be your original work. If you have published it elsewhere you must put this on the article. If you are quoting other people's work you must reference their work.

Articles must be submitted by email or on disc (MS Word preferred).

All major articles are reviewed by two people. The reviewers may make some changes so that the article is clear and concise. You may be contacted to make some changes to the article.

Length

Articles should not exceed 2500 words, including the references. This is equivalent to 11 double spaced pages.

Format

Use two levels of headings. All articles should be double spaced. Include a title, authors name and contact details (email and phone number). Use one space after punctuation.

The first paragraph is flush.

And all subsequent paragraphs are indented, with no extra spacing between them. Use headings to make it easier for the reader to understand.

For the first level heading use all capitals, centred with one line space above and one below. For second level headings use a capital letter for the first letter of each word, centred with one line space above and one line space below, for example:

FIRST LEVEL HEADING

Second Level Heading

Writing Style

Use short sentences and plain language. Include pictures or photos that add to the meaning of the text and add interest to the article.

Photos need to be at least 10cm x 15cm and preferably high resolution jpeg files. Please label all pictures, tables, graphs etc. If you would like to include a reprint of any previously published material (e.g. diagrams, graphs etc) you need to seek permission from the author/publisher first. Acronyms should be used only after the full term has been written and is followed by the acronym in parentheses, e.g. Australian Group on Severe Communication Impairment (AGOSCI).

References

Full references should be included at the end of the article. References should be in American Psychological Association (APA) (1994 or 2001) style. The reference list is organised alphabetically, with italics, overhanging indent and punctuation as shown in the following examples for journal articles and books.

Bloggs, J. (1999). The relationship between red wine consumption and tooth decay. *Journal of Teeth and Wine*, 34, 99- 909.

Bloggs, J. & Bliggs, S. (2001). *Correlates of lifestyle and health*. Melbourne: Big Banana Publications.

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Bliggs, S. *Chocolate Myths*. Retrieved June 11, 2007, from <http://chocolaterocks.com.au>

Article Submission

Do not be daunted! If you want to write something and are not sure what all this means contact the editor and ask for help. We want to encourage you to write and share your experiences.

Contact Emily Armstrong:
emilyarmstrong.ea@gmail.com

or Sheridan Forster:
sheridanf@yahoo.com

and see www.agosci.org.au for more details.

Thanks to ACQ for permission to adapt their "notes to authors" guidelines. Go to website for full details.



Ylana Bloom



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Autism Resources

for speech pathologists, teachers, parents, disability professionals

Success at Work Series

by Caroline McMurtrie, Ylana Bloom & Dolly Bhargava

Success at Work Series presents information and activities associated with the various skills essential to job success and preparation for entry into the workforce. Titles include:
- LOOKING GOOD!, GET UP AND GO, MONEY SENSE. YOU AND YOUR TEAM, IN SHAPE.

Autism series 1: To Help Me You Need To Understand Me:

A Care Resource Package for Parents and Carers of Children with Autism Spectrum and Other Related Disorders

By Ylana Bloom, Dolly Bhargava & Cathy Madden

This practical manual imparts knowledge, shares experiences, insights and a range of successful strategies. It was prepared by a mother of a child with Autism with input and support from members of her daughter's professional support network including Speech Therapists, Psychologists, and Special Educators. The book also provides a template for carers to compile their own unique document, which can then be shared with family and professionals.

Autism Series 2: 'Time to Talk' :

Communication Strategies for enhancing social understanding for people with Autism Spectrum and other related disorders

By Ylana Bloom, Dolly Bhargava & Elizabeth Ponce

This manual aims to promote a deeper understanding of the skills and strategies involved in effectively teaching conversational skills to individuals with ASD's (Autism Spectrum Disorders) and other related disorders, in order to increase social interaction.

Using AAC to develop emotions and problem solving skills

by Ylana Bloom and Dolly Bhargava

The purpose of this manual is to provide the communication partner with a step-by-step problem solving process that they can use to develop a working alliance with the individual so that they can both work together in attacking problems in everyday life and coming up with solutions.

AAC strategies for Positive Behaviour Support to deal with Challenging Behaviour

by Ylana Bloom and Dolly Bhargava

Many people use behaviour to communicate because their current communication skills are not effective. This book addresses the issue of challenging behaviour from a positive behaviour support perspective by discussing the possible causes of communication breakdown. Examples of AAC strategies to assist the person effectively and efficiently without having to resort to using the behaviour of concern have been provided.

Softpics Professional and Fantastic Pics

It is a flexible and easy to use software package for creating stunning Augmentative Communication Displays. It contains over 2500 images and a large range of design tools, which allows you to create displays that can be tailored to individual needs. It has been designed by Australians for Australians and has images associated with the disability standards.

Let's Talk Together Package – Original and Update by Ylana Bloom and Dolly Bhargava

This is a user-friendly resource, which offers simple and functional communication ideas for people with complex communication needs. The update includes explanations and examples of using a variety of communication systems such as schedules, calendars, activity checklists, chat systems, social stories, social scripts, circle of friends, problem solution charts and meetings systems etc.



Augmentative Communication Online Courses

We offer online courses on the following topics:

- Communication assessment and intervention for preintentional communicators
- Communication assessment for intentional and symbolic communicators
- Communication intervention for intentional and symbolic communicators
- Developing emotions and problem solving skills
- Using positive behaviour support to manage challenging behaviour



Announces the 2008 National Tour

AGOSCI

Literacy in AAC

Presented by

Karen Erickson and David Koppenhaver

Tour Dates

- ◆ Brisbane 16th June 2008
- ◆ Sydney 18th of June 2008
- ◆ Perth 20th June 2008
- ◆ Adelaide 23rd June 2008
- ◆ Melbourne 25th of June 2008
- ◆ Webcast 27th June 2008
(at remote sites, to be announced.)

About the presenters

Karen Erickson

Karen Erickson, PhD, is the current director of the Center for Literacy and Disability Studies and is a former teacher of children with significant disabilities. Knowledgeable in literacy, assistive and instructional technologies, augmentative communication, and the learning characteristics of children with significant disabilities, she is in great demand as a presenter, consultant, and program developer. In 2004, Dr. Erickson was awarded the Educator of the Year Award from the National Down Syndrome Congress and the ISAAC Distinguished Literacy Lectureship Award. Her assessment and intervention strategies are described in numerous journal articles and book chapters.

David Koppenhaver

David Koppenhaver, PhD, is the former director of the Center for Literacy and Disability Studies and has worked for the past 20 years with preschool- and school-aged children who have a wide variety of literacy learning difficulties. He currently teaches undergraduate classes in reading methods, special education, and instructional technology. He has written and lectured widely on literacy instruction for children with significant disabilities and was the recipient of the 1998 ISAAC/Don Johnston, Inc. Distinguished Lecturer Award. He collaborated with Karen Erickson and David Yoder in organising a collection of AAC/literacy case studies for the book *Waves of Words: Augmentative Communicators Read and Write* and co-edited an issue of *Topics in Language Disorders* on literacy and AAC interventions for persons with autism.

Join the AGOSCI Listserve at www.agosci.org.au for more information or email Jane Farrall jane@spectronicsinoz.com to be added to the mailing list


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