

# InFOCUS

SUMMER 2020

ISSUE 46 VOLUME 1



READ INTERVIEW  
ON *page 20.*

**ENGAGING  
IN EYE GAZE**

**TANITH BRIEN AND MICHELLE LIDDCOAT**

**agosci**  
inc.



**REMEMBERING**

*Bruce Baker*

**1943 – 2020**

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**INVENTED MINSPEAK**

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AGOSCI thanks Bruce Baker for all his work. Without him, so many would be without a voice. His magnificent mind constantly helped us to strive towards quicker, more efficient ways to communicate and teach communication. The field of AAC will not be the same without him.

The AGOSCI community sends its respects and condolences to Bruce's loved ones, friends and colleagues.

*We will honor you by continuing to provide up to date education and support for the AAC community.*

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

AGOSCI InFocus is an ISAAC affiliated publication.

### COVER PHOTOS



Schools involved in Indigo Australasia "Engaging in Eye Gaze: Access All Learning Areas" project.

*Read story on page 20*

AAC Awareness Month annual AAC picnic in South Australia

*Read more on page 3*

### DISCLAIMER

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## CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT

Welcome to the latest edition of AGOSCI InFocus. The AGOSCI executive continues to be busy planning our National Tour, webinars, other PD events, and representing us at national events. We continue to work with SCOPE on our Communication Access accreditation, and Speech Pathology Australia on various projects. PR wise look out for us at the upcoming Source Kids expo in Sydney.

We are all looking forward to Kathy Howery's visit next month for our National Tour. She is an amazing international AAC expert researcher, who will no doubt influence our practice in many ways. People who have heard her speak previously reflect highly on her style and content. So please support AGOSCI, and see you there at one of our many venues around Australia.

Our AGM is nearly upon us, in May. This is a time when you might like to consider ways that you can help AGOSCI, as all positions are open for

nominations. Even if you don't want to a regular seat at the table, you can always help in little ways, so speak to one of the exec if you can. Remember that AGOSCI is run by volunteers, so everyone needs to chip in to make it work!

Finally a big thanks to outgoing executive members. Queensland rep Alison Moorecroft has been replaced by appointment by Carly Galvin and Shannon Braithwaite. Plus a big big thanks to Jess Preston who has been our wonderful InFocus editor for the last few years. Good luck to you all on your next adventures!

And last but not least, don't forget to put Hobart 2021 (September to be specific!) into your diary now, our next biennial conference!

*Regards,*

**:: DARREN TRENTPOHL**

## SOUTH AUSTRALIA STATE REPORT



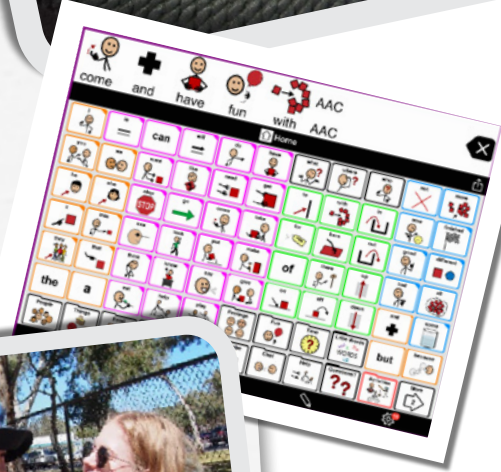
*AGOSCI South Australia have been busy socialising!*

In October we celebrated AAC Awareness Month with the annual AAC picnic, this was held at the inclusive playground at Hendrie Street, Park Holme. It was fantastic to see so many new faces and some regulars as well, chatting is fun!

We are all looking forward to the upcoming AGOSCI 2020 National Tour in May with Dr Kathy Howrey. The Reach of my Voice - Towards Autonomy workshop focusses on the lived experiences of people who use AAC and how their experiences, words and knowledge can inform our AAC practice and teaching.

*Do not forget to register at the AGOSCI website.*

**:: JODIE WHITFORD**



## AGOSCI WEBINAR SERIES

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

→ [www.agosci.org.au](http://www.agosci.org.au)

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

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

**What is AAC, and what does it look like?** Presented by Janelle Sampson

**Towards Cohesive Language Development in AAC** Presented by Cathy Binger

**Being Part of the AACtion** Presented by Fiona Given

**How I Became an AAC Communicator** Presented by Nick Bradbury

**Championing Communication Access for All** Presented by Barbara Solarsh and Georgia Burn (from Scope)

**AAC and the NDIS - Surfing the Waves of Change** Presented by Gail Bennell

**Achieving Functional Communication Through Minspeak** Presented by Siobhan Daley

**Assessment and AAC - Where do we start? What am I looking for?** Presented by Janelle Sampson

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

**What's in a Voice? An overview of message banking and voice banking** Presented by Peta Booth, Speech Pathologist from Life Tec Australia

**Understanding Parent Rejection and Abandonment of AAC Systems** Presented by Alison Moorcroft

**Using AAC to give evidence in court and tribunal hearings** Presented by Fiona Given

**Implementing music therapy and AAC in a lower resourced set** Presented by Kylie Hinde and Farhin Chowdhury

**Championing Communication Access for All** Presented by Barbara Solarsh and Georgia Burn (from Scope)

**Online therapy: making the most of technology to support AAC users and people with complex communication needs.** Presented by Edward Johnson

**Finding your way with AAC AT provision in the NDIS: A joint collaboration between AGOSCI and Speech Pathology Australia** Presented by Cathy Olsson and Jessica Moll

**Supporting Adults with Profound and Multiple Disabilities** Presented by Dr Sheridan Forster

**AAC and Literacy** Presented by Ash Harling

**How do I need to be in order to be with you?": Supporting adults with profound intellectual and multiple disabilities** Presented by Sheridan Forster

**Encouraging the promotion of long-term AAC use: learning from social identity theory** Presented by Ruyi Tong

**I Have A Dream For Communication - AGOSCI Conference Keynote Presentation 2019** Presented by Joey Harrall

**SPA x AGOSCI: Considerations for AAC Assessment in the World of NDIS** Presented by Cathy Olsson and Jessica Moll

**Moving beyond object requesting for AAC users with ASD: What does the research say?** Presented by Kristy Logan

**SPA x AGOSCI: Considerations for AAC Assessment in the World of NDIS (Webinar #3)** Presented by Cathy Olsson and Jessica Moll

**International perspectives on Easy English and Easy Read: What do we need to know?** Presented by Cathy Basterfield





## KEEP UP WITH AGOSCI

1,372

602  
Members



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

- ➔ [www.agosci.org.au](http://www.agosci.org.au)
- f [www.facebook.com/AGOSCI](https://www.facebook.com/AGOSCI)
- t <https://twitter.com/agosci>

### JOIN US ON FACEBOOK

#### AGOSCI MEMBERS FORUM

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

- f [www.facebook.com/groups/agosci.forum](https://www.facebook.com/groups/agosci.forum)

#### AGOSCI PARENT SUPPORT GROUP

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

- f [www.facebook.com/groups/1689310747981459/](https://www.facebook.com/groups/1689310747981459/)



POEMS

REFLECTIONS OF A MAN WITH AUTISM

By Hem Sid

My mind flies in circles  
 I raise my voice  
 My thoughts kind of spin  
 I see waves  
 Pink blue  
 No sound  
 Lost in thought  
 Love is only a distant hope  
 I rise every day to another promise not kept by science  
 Old only in number of days on earth  
 Young in pretty much everything  
 Pity, I do not voice my thoughts  
 No one understands  
 Ultimately both life and oneself are like words that are no sooner born than gone  
 They melt in the air



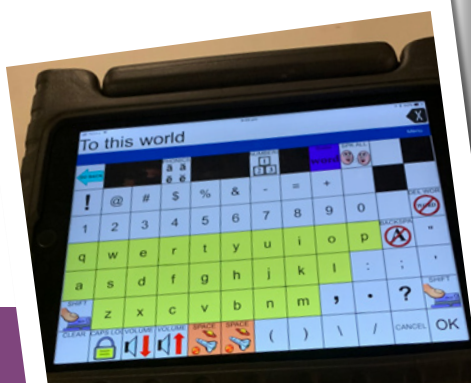
WORDS

By Wayne Gallor

The words all came rushing  
 The words were all there  
 When writing and living  
 To this world I was finally giving



Wayne is a 27 year old man who is a vibrant and brilliant soul who began using LAMP – Words For Life approximately 5 years ago. Wayne identifies himself as a man who has Autism and anxiety and a great sense of humour.

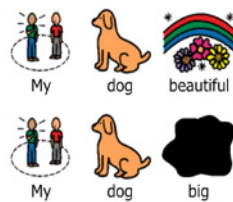


DOGS

by Lucy Brolling

My dog beautiful  
 My dog big  
 My dog run

Written by Lucy (age 6) using her compass PODD app.



SHORT POEM SUBMISSIONS

Jess Preston took to the tables at the Perth 2019 conference lunches, morning teas and catch ups and asked some of people who use AAC to write a short anonymously published short poem for our next edition of AIF. Here's what some had to say:

1 long for touch  
 To kiss  
 To say  
 To hold  
 And mostly be loved

Think too much  
 Life too bright  
 Sometimes a long for quiet of night



THE FOOD IS HERE  
 THE AFTER DRINKS WILL BE SOON  
 I WOULD DO MUCH BETTER  
 IF I'D REMEMBERED MY SPOON

Say what you want  
 Very need now  
 1 like here  
 Think out head



## SCHOLARSHIP WINNERS



*To the AGOSCI conference committee and sponsors.*

Please accept my enormous gratitude for the opportunity to attend the AGOSCI conference in Perth with a scholarship.

I am from Albury NSW, and there is no way that I would have been in a position to attend without the scholarship.

I learned so much, and made connections, but more importantly, felt a sense of belonging.

### HIGHLIGHTS FOR ME INCLUDED:

- **Jaquie Mills' keynote**, particularly the mention of "confirmation bias".
- **Janice Murray's pineapple analogy**. This made me reflect on the extent to which we communicate to make the communication partner comfortable. If I can see that someone is clearly not understanding me, I will often point to the sky (or out the window), smile, and say, "nice day" (or similar predictable concept), simply to make the other person feel okay. This is useful when I think about how to truly understand the stories of alternative communicators.
- **Darryl Selwood's presentation about intimate partner relationships**. Was so good for me to see someone achieving high level academic success when so often the expectation for people with significant physical disability is so restricting. I am pushing through uni so slowly.
- **Meeting David Neimeijer**. The concept that he achieved with the Proloquo2Go system is so logical (so I claim that he is my hero), and

for that reason I wonder about the potential for its use with people who have dementia, or have difficulty finding the right words. To me, English is really just an abstract code, yet having a folder for "things", "actions", "feelings", "descriptions" etc seems to be a far more logical way of accessing the right word.

- **Meeting Charlene and Bas from Link AT**. Link AT was the supplier of my device, and meeting people who know my system was like finally meeting people who speak my language.
- **Meeting Ria**, even though briefly, to share telepathically that we share some similar values.
- **Meeting Sally Hunter**, who believed in me, and encouraged me to keep trying with what I hope to achieve.
- **Meeting Ryui Tong**, who seems to have some similar ideas and values, and who I'm sure will be someone to share ideas with down the track.

*And so many more.*

Unfortunately, I didn't get to go to as many presentations as I would have liked... I wanted to go to them all!!

Again, thank you so much for this incredible opportunity. I'm still recovering, but so excited and motivated to continue towards my dream.

*I'm so very grateful for the opportunity.*

Sincerely,  
**Johanna**

A letter from

**JOHANNA SCHMIDT**

## COMMUNICATION MATTERS

Communication Matters, a UK-wide charity that supports people of all ages within the Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) sector, celebrated its very first AAC Awards Ceremony late last year, directly in line with AAC Awareness month. Hosted at the University of Leeds, and supported by the university's conference and events facilities MEETinLEEDS, the awards ceremony honoured the individuals that use all forms of communication, their families, as well as the companies and professionals that provide support in these areas.



Amongst the winners, who were all credited for their hard work and dedication to the AAC community, **LAITH RITCHIE**, a 16-year-old augmentative and alternative communication user, scooped up **Communication Matters' Rising Star award** for making such a significant impact on the lives of many AAC users over the past 12 months.

It all began in 2018, when Laith attended the UK's leading AAC event, the Communication Matters conference, where he was able to take part in a unique forum with an array of representatives across multiple disciplines, including AAC users, parents, personal

assistants, professionals and more. One year later, Laith achieved the Rising Star Award at Communication Matters' very first awards ceremony in October, highlighting his huge achievements within the sector over the past 12 months, which all stemmed from inspiration which came from his time at the Communication Matters conference last year. Not only has his attendance at the conference led him to huge personal achievements, but his dedication to the sector has also enabled him to make a positive impact on AAC parents, carers and users of AAC equipment.



### DID YOU KNOW?

Communication disability in the UK affects millions of people. Up to 20% of the UK's population experience communication difficulty at some point in their lives, and more than 10% of all children have a long-term communication need.

Laith's involvement in AAC has generated further support in such an important sector that relies heavily on volunteers.

For more information about MEETinLEEDS, please contact **Stacey Kedwards** or **Niamh Boylan**.

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## LAITH TALKS ABOUT HIS JOURNEY

### What inspired you to get involved within the AAC sector?

- I was first inspired to get involved when I attended the **2018 Communication Matters conference**. It was really interesting to hear from the many different people who presented at the conference, as it broadened my horizons on what I could do to support AAC.
- Afterwards, I immediately **registered my interest**.
- I then **applied for a job as an AAC mentor**.
- One month later, I **had an interview with AT Mentors** and was thrilled to have been **offered the job on a voluntary basis**.
- In April this year I was **offered a permanent position** - a great achievement and it's all thanks to the conference I attended last year!



### What have you learned since becoming an AT Mentor?

Since becoming a mentor I have learnt an incredible amount, including how other AAC users need support to learn how to use the technology. I love my job a huge amount and it's great to be able to deliver training to parents, carers and schools who are new to supporting an AAC user.

### Why is AAC important to you?

I've always felt that AAC is such a vast and important area that affects so many people's lives, which is why I was so keen to contribute. AAC enables me to achieve things that I would not normally be able to do, due to my speech impediment. If more individuals like me had a chance to access AAC, the dreams of many would become a reality. As part of my work I see so much potential and with AAC they can achieve anything that they want!

### How did you feel after winning the Rising Star Award?

“ **ACHIEVING THE AAC RISING STAR AWARD WAS SUCH A WONDERFUL MOMENT WITHIN MY CAREER, AND IT'S FANTASTIC TO SEE THAT MY HARD WORK IS BEING RECOGNISED BY SO MANY PEOPLE WITHIN THE SECTOR.** ”

The awards were a fantastic way to celebrate all those within the AAC sector, and they act as great motivation to continue the hard work!





## NOW COMMUNICATION

BY DR SHERIDAN FORSTER

Thousands of adults with severe and profound intellectual disabilities are now, through the NDIS, having access to speech pathology services. In many ways this is new territory for therapists, as experienced therapists are flooded with referrals and new therapists are entering the field.

For many therapists, the traditional way of working may have been to examine present skills and recommend the next level of complexity. There is a logical impetus to work towards expanding a person's communication repertoire and teach symbolic systems which will be more easily understood by partners. Particularly with the rise of electronic communication systems, devices are recommended with the hope that partners will model the systems rigorously until the person can then use it both for comprehension and expressive communication.

What is sometimes missing, however, is a deep examination of what the person understands now and what they express now. What a person does now is their now communication. It is how they connect, share, and relate to the world and people around them. It is their strongest neurological network. Speaking neurologically, what a person does while they are sitting by themselves tells us the much about their understanding – what they are doing by themselves is where their attention is focused. It may be tiny movements of fingers, shaking of a foot, sucking movements at their mouth, rhythmic rocking. Some movements may be voluntary, some involuntary but triggered by particular conditions. These movements are the textures that permeate the person's day, either with a connection to the environment outside of the person's body or mediated by internal factors. If we are sincere about interacting with a person, then it is part of the language that we must use with them.

Firstly, let's consider what the person understands. Understanding what a person understands necessitates a grasp of the person's sensory functioning. The more severe a person's cognitive impairment, the greater the likelihood that they will experience sensory impairments... sadly though, the more likely their sensory impairments will not have been diagnosed. Unfortunately too many people may have not accessed assessments of vision and hearing, and those who have may have findings of "non-compliant with testing", "not assessable", or a polarised diagnosis of deaf or blind versus hearing or seeing. Few will have a quality low vision assessment that addresses what the person can see, the colours, the settings, and the distances which best enable them to use the vision they have, and avoid

painful visual stimuli like glare or particular colours. Few will have hearing aids, a description of which ear functions best, or a diagnosis of hyperacusis and its distressing affect when the person is in particular auditory environments.

Subsequently, our assessments of what a person can understand requires creative problem solving. We examine the person's responses to sounds, including our voice, at different positions, pitches, and volumes. We watch the person's responses to sounds, from turning, leaning, or attempts to cover their ears either with their fingers or through self creation of sounds that can block out external sounds. We watch for how the person uses their eyes: looking at people across the room or only when a person is sitting next to them. Their response to colours: reds, yellows, fluorescents, bright on dark on an iPad, light tracking in a darkened room, or light gazing (all giving some clues around potential cortical vision impairment).

Most importantly we examine how the person responds to ours and other's engagement with them. What do they respond to: words, tone of voice, presence of a person, touch of a person? Do they demonstrate anticipation in an activity, memory of an action? Do they smile on your smile, laugh with your laugh, or demonstrate fear or indifference? If you ask them, "can I sit down?" and gesture to a spot, do they minutely nod, shift their posture, or demonstrate tensing muscles? How close will they accept your presence – a gaze from across the room, two metres away, on the couch, sitting with knees together? A deep curiosity for what a person may or may not understand is needed. For some people, with the possibility that they understand speech, you may preface your assessment with *"I have just met you and I want to learn what you understand and how you express yourself; you can learn about me too"*.

We need to accept, with seriousness, that we need to communicate with the person in a way that they can understand; to not do so compromises shared meaning. It is inauthentic. For some people, this means our first language directed to them needs to be impressions on their skin at different body parts – firm, soft, quick, tickly, slow, tiny, broad, clapping, tensing... a rich language of sharing of the feelings of life. Some will need a rich language of non contact gestures such as pointing, along with our face expressing happiness, frustration, tiredness, shared excitement. For others, single words with gestures will be their way

of understanding; acknowledgement is needed that a multiword sentence may result in many words floating into the air and the words that land at the person's comprehension may not be the ones intended (e.g. *"don't hit Santa" may only be understood as "hit"*).

Our next challenge is to see how the person expresses themselves. Again, we observe the movements that the person makes when alone. What is their face expressing, their hands, their feet, their torso, their sounds. Often the expressions are best translated not into words, but word qualities: languid, excitable, considered, heightened, restful, attentive. In presence with a partner, what expressions do you see: leaning in proximity, reaching, retracting, caution, lingering gaze, smile, lip smacking, pointing, eyebrow raising. We look for any signals indicating levels of arousal. For some people, in parallel to typical infants, turning away, grasping hands together and wringing, may be used to reduce a feeling of being overwhelmed in an interaction. They are signals for a partner to slow, soften, and wait for reengagement, but are too often interpreted as signals for the partner to leave the person alone.

Everyone is expressing themselves in some way. Their moves and stillness are all expressing a state of being. We need to observe with our eyes, ears, and touch senses to capture the expressions that can share a meaning about what the person is thinking or feeling in the present moment. Much like the act of mindfulness, we need to be aware of all that is happening now.

Sometimes the way a person expresses themselves can best be seen by looking at a video recording of an interaction. Transcripts of interaction, describing the moves beyond words, allow the dialogue to be observed. Watching the video, in different ways, allows you to change your lens for meaning. Watching without sound will reveal another story. Watching in slow motion will illuminate how two people are responding to each other microscopically; the proposition of who initiated and who responded will become blurred. As a therapist, you can write down this transcript to help other people see what you are seeing, and explore alternative interpretations to what you see, including acknowledging when you are not sure what a person is expressing with particularly movements or sounds. Setting this scene of curiosity and willingness to be right, wrong, and explore alternative interpretations is an essential stepping stone in quality planning, goal setting, or supported decision making.

Combining an understanding of a person's comprehension and expression lays the foundation for an authentic conversation with the person using what they can do. Feelings can be shared and heard, expanded or softened. To be shown that you've been understood by another person is the blossom of a flower – "*<<I express my feelings and my partner shows me they've understood (or tried to understand) by repeating my feeling in the same way>>*". To respond to a person's feeling by only using words, for example the person laughs and you say "you're happy" may be a speckle of meaningless word dust to the person. But for you to laugh back, lands on the person's brain – "*<<it is evidence they my partner knows what I know>>*". The same is true for expressions of sadness, pain or frustration. It is important to hear and let the person know you've heard their expression before being tempted to try to change their state. For example, a person growls, grasps their chest and writhes suggesting possible reflux – you can respond by making the same sound to let them know they are heard. You will often find that people will gaze towards you or pause if you repeat their action, showing that they have noticed you noticing them. In the area of mental health we know that validating a person's feeling is essential. To have your feelings ignored, invalidated, leads to feelings of isolation, exacerbation of the feeling, and fails to support a person in developing their resilience or problem solving for responding to the feelings. Holding someone's hand, metaphorically, with the feeling, allows you to meet the person where they are, and gently guide them to a resolution – even if that resolution is that pain, frustration, anger, and sadness happen, "*<<but I am not alone with it>>*".

Topics of "*<<how about we do this with our hands>>*", or "*<<let's drop these objects>>*" form the basis of turn-taking and anticipation. Often our perception of whether a person is truly understanding turntaking is at first tentative; "I'm not sure if they do understand it... but we go with it", admits it's exploratory nature. Simple sharing or games build rapport and a desire to be with another person. It is also essential to acknowledge that turn taking is only possible if two people access to the same behaviour. You can not turn take in a clapping hand if one partner cannot move their hand. You can not turn take in a song if one partner has no voice. But if you both have access to a movement or sound, then you have what is needed for a turn taking interaction – subsequently using what you've observed about what

## NOW COMMUNICATION CONT.

BY DR SHERIDAN FORSTER

the person can already do is needed is the starting point for this mutually imitative engagement.

Unfortunately, what is missing from many of our service systems and communication interventions is the essential ingredients of two people who want to authentically engage with each other.

Here lies the challenge in assessments and interventions for adults with severe and profound levels of intellectual disability – two people who want to authentically engage with each other.

Our assessment reports need to take the ingredients and spell out the recipe. The recipe for authentic engagement with a person with the most complex communication needs is rarely obvious. It is rarely an adaptation of an old family favourite that you've used for years. It is a thoroughly unique combination of understanding what the person understands, being receptive to every expression that the person makes, creating a bridge of sharing meaning using these ingredients.

Every time we meet a person, they already have a language. The sad thing is, too often others are failing to use their language with them. Others are often trying to pull the person to use a different language, perhaps speech or pictures. Second language learning is of value; don't get me wrong. But failing to use the person's now communication, even as a foundation for building their second language, leaves the person in a communicative abyss. Alone. Not understood. Not shared.

Our reports and interventions need to teach partners the person's rich now communication. The reports and interventions need to give permission and overcome systemic barriers that may try to stop us from using the person's language. Our reports, interventions, and interactions need to acknowledge the complex ethical issues, and the dynamic way that we need to explore how to be with a person authentically where there will be points where we are unsure of meanings or what the right thing to do is. People with severe and profound intellectual disabilities are complete people now, they are communicative and relational now... we need to be willing to meet them.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

### Resources for thinking about now communication

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## FEELINGS RICH LANGUAGE LEARNING

BY THERAPISTS AT MAMRE



...I WISH I HAD A WAY OF KNOWING WHAT SHE WAS FEELING

...THINGS WOULD BE EASIER IF I ONLY KNEW WHAT WAS WRONG WITH HIM

Learning how to use and understand language and words is tough, so why is language specifically about 'feelings' extra tricky? If you think about it, a lot of feeling related language is not said out loud.

There are your own feelings.

Other people's feelings.

There's often a charge related to our feelings.

Feelings require nuance. Self-awareness.



Sometimes we *show* how we are feeling through our body language, facial expression or by joining in or not joining in, as well as through other behaviour. Some folk with communication differences can appear to feel things bigger, faster, more intensely than others. People with complex communication needs often need to be quite creative with the way they share emotions, because the words aren't always there for them. This can look like: overwhelm, ending the interaction, getting loud, moving around, withdrawing, prolonged meltdown, flipping your lid, basically getting dysregulated.

And when those big feelings happen, a fight-flight-freeze response may also happen, and that makes it even harder to find communication that works to explain what's going on or how I feel. Developing skills relating to feelings helps us become more social thinkers and communicators. It assists us to join in, make friends, deepen our existing relationships and navigate different social situations with more ease and efficiency.

Families, therapists, teachers and support workers benefit from having some ideas for how to model, use and teach feelings language as a way of enabling their important person to become more skilled in understanding and expressing feeling language. In the long term, understanding our own feelings can lead to resilience and increasing our wellness. Being able to express our feelings successfully and having them understood by others can create satisfaction and a sense of increased choice and control in our lives.

**FEELINGS RICH LANGUAGE LEARNING CONT.**

**BY THERAPISTS AT MAMRE**

# LEARNING TO USE FEELINGS WORDS

Talking about feelings and teaching people to express their feelings



## 1. TALK ABOUT FEELINGS YOU SEE IN OTHERS

Talk through what someone else, unrelated to you is feeling (on the TV, in a YouTube Clip, at your local park park)



"HE has a BIG FEELING. HE LOOKS MAD."



## 2. NARRATE OUT LOUD YOUR OWN FEELINGS

Become the narrator to your own inner thoughts. The little stuff and the big stuff.

"I DON'T LIKE THAT",  
"I FEEL GRUMPY because \_\_\_\_\_",  
"MY HEAD HURTS. I AM SAD"  
"I am so EXCITED we are going to the beach".

## 3. COMMENT ON THEIR FEELINGS

Before you ask loads of questions, spend some time 'wondering out loud' about how they might be feeling.



"I SEE a BIG SMILE. I wonder if you are ENJOYING this song?"  
"I SEE YOU standing VERY STILL and notice your muscles are tight. I wonder if YOU are FEELING a BIG FEELING"



## 4. PROVIDE AN OPPORTUNITY AND WAY FOR SOMEONE TO TELL YOU THEIR FEELINGS

REMEMBER: This is the hardest thing for any of us to do. Adding in communication difficulties into the mix and its even more difficult. Each time you ask someone "What's wrong", "How are you feeling?" ask yourself How many times has this person seen how to answer this.

PROVIDE A FEELINGS RICH LANGUAGE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

DEVELOPED MARCH 2020

**01 Consider the different ways we hear and learn about emotions**

It can be helpful to think about introducing language in four different ways. The first being hopefully slightly easier to tolerate and the last being the most confronting. Its not a perfect formula, where you can start with the first step and then work through to the last but it does provide a way to reflect.



**02 Check in and ask these types of reflection questions**

- **What do I wish they could say?**  
> how many times have they seen that in done in their own language/ communication style (AAC, verbal speech, gesture)
- **Does this persons current communication method allow them to have enough access to robust language to be able to talk about what is happening for them?**







## CLICK TIPS FROM THE EDITOR

Within this section of AGOSCI InFocus I aim to share online links which may provide you with inspiration, motivation and opportunities to learn more about AAC, assistive technology, communication and more. Happy clicking!

**Please note ::** AGOSCI is not paid or affiliated with any companies mentioned below. These are purely great ideas that can be adapted for a range of robust communication tools.

### PDF AND WEBPAGES



#### SPEAK FOR YOURSELF

Learn to speak action plan

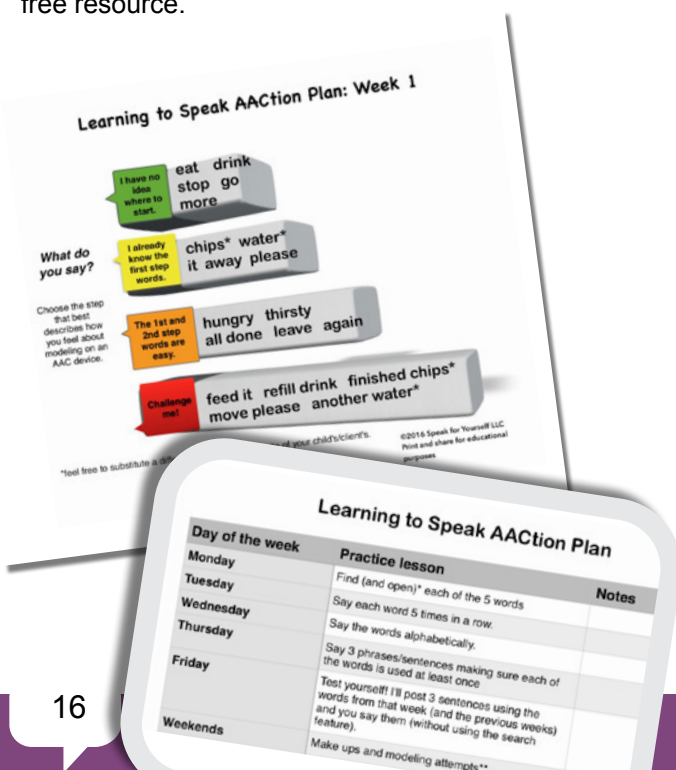
This resource was developed by Heidi LoStracco a Speech Pathologist working with Speak for Yourself back in 2016. This simple, but well thought out action plan gives support persons (family, friends, teachers, support workers etc) a plan to follow for modelling language. Perfect for those looking for a place to start with more guidance than just a list of words. I strongly recommend checking it out!

→ <https://bit.ly/SFYplan>

It is also recently linked through the “Hold my Words” Facebook page which can be found here:

f [www.facebook.com/HoldMyWords/](http://www.facebook.com/HoldMyWords/)

The two images below are taken directly from their free resource.



#### AAC IN THE CLOUD

This free online AAC conference is a great place to source free webinars on a range of different topics. Past sessions are all still freely available with a huge line up of presentations to occur in this years AAC in the cloud (23rd-24th June 2020).

→ [www.AACconference.com](http://www.AACconference.com)



#### JANE FARRALL CONSULTING

The fantastic Jane Farrall has loaded a heap of new content to her website during since April with a range of lovely books and ideas for readers at all stages. Her information remains easy to read and a great resource for educators and families alike.

→ [www.janefarrall.com](http://www.janefarrall.com)

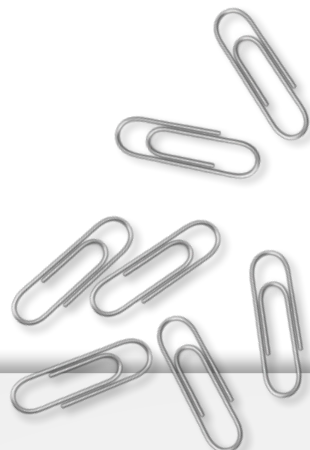
### FACEBOOK



#### THE AAC COACH

This Facebook page provides some lovely handouts that are perfect for providing information to families and support teams.

f [www.facebook.com/theaacoach/](http://www.facebook.com/theaacoach/)



## YOUTUBE



### ASSISTIVWARE

Assistiveware's Amanda Hartmann (SLP) provides some lovely AAC ideas on YouTube. Many are Proloquo2go specific but you could use their tips and ideas for a range of displays. They have also recorded some live Facebook videos that give some great tips for Telehealth and online learning.

*Check out* **“How to screen share with your communication device”** or **“How to copy and write books with messages created within a communication app”**

▶ [www.youtube.com/channel/UCLXcxkjHUlcAqa\\_jTewbpzA](http://www.youtube.com/channel/UCLXcxkjHUlcAqa_jTewbpzA)



### TEACHER ROE

So much beautiful content has been created and shared during the Covid-19 shut downs. It is almost overwhelming. The good news is that much of this information will remain freely available, even when things return to “normal”. Teacher Roe is one example of this. She is a teacher from the states who has great energy and uses some basic AAC visuals to support her communication during morning circle, reading and songs. She is fun and genuine throughout each video. Check her out for some motivation and great book ideas.

▶ [www.youtube.com/channel/UChF-n0RfKr6UvT2Lwj1csHA/playlists](http://www.youtube.com/channel/UChF-n0RfKr6UvT2Lwj1csHA/playlists)

## FACEBOOK GROUP AND PODCASTS

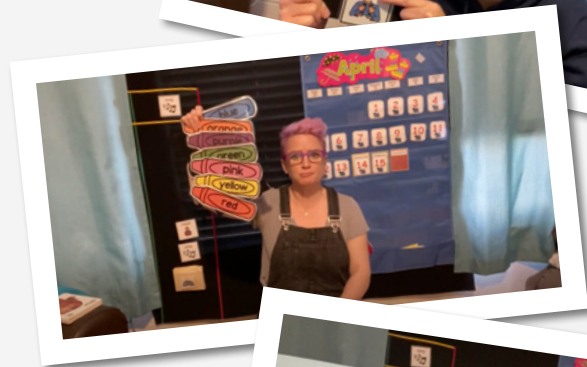


### TALKING WITH TECH

This is a Podcast and Facebook group is presented by two AAC experts Rachel Madel and Chris Bugaj. New content every week! They also offer some webinars.

f [www.facebook.com/groups/talkingwithtech/?ref=share](https://www.facebook.com/groups/talkingwithtech/?ref=share)

▶ <https://linktr.ee/talkingwithtech>



## DISABILITY SECTOR, HERE I COME!

EDITH COWAN UNIVERSITY

*Reflections on how we are preparing speech pathology students for the sector*

Recognising the increased demand for skilled graduates for the disability field, lecturers from Edith Cowan University (ECU)'s Bachelor of Speech Pathology developed a new final-year unit called Disability and Communication.

The nation-wide rollout of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) means every individual with disability (in Australia) is given greater choice and control to access the reasonable and necessary supports they need to live an ordinary life (NDIS, 2019). As communication is the medium for greater choice and control, it is vital that speech pathology graduates are skilled in working with individuals who use Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC).

**ECU's new unit was recently launched and delivered as a five-day lecture/workshop intensive.**

A key learning outcome was to **equip our students with the capabilities necessary to support clients to communicate by accessing and using individualised, robust AAC systems**. To achieve this aim, lectures were co-designed based on input from a range of stakeholders. Stakeholders comprised of AAC users, AAC equipment suppliers, educators from an education support school, disability service providers and academics from ECU's School of Education (see Jones, 2016) who run the Graduate Certificate in Special Education for Complex Communication Needs, described in). We felt that it was important to obtain a range of perspectives as a way for students to develop a richer understanding of why this area is important, and how this knowledge may be applied in practice. The assessment process (and assignments) were also purposefully designed to reinforce students' learning and ability to apply theoretical knowledge into real-world activities.

The outcomes of this new unit are currently being evaluated by our students and their clinical educators through the research component of this work, partly funded by an AGOSCI research scholarship. Findings will be shared with the wider AGOSCI community and published in a relevant journal.

For more information about their work, please contact **Abigail or Ruyi** at Edith Cowan University.

e :: Abigail.Lewis@ecu.edu.au

p :: r.tong@ecu.edu.au

## REFERENCES

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## IN THE MEDIA

### HIGHLIGHTING INDIVIDUALS WHO COMMUNICATE USING AAC

People with complex communication needs feel the impact of social isolation on a daily basis. But, how much does the general public understand about it?

Recently, ABC's program - Australia Talks survey reveals that Australians who don't live with a disability rarely socialize with people who do. The program titled "**Social Isolation**" was first broadcast on AM Saturday 23 November 2019.

**Lisa Ho was delighted to be interviewed for this program** and she would highly recommend this insightful podcast.



### 🔍 DID YOU KNOW?

“The Australia Talks survey revealed that three-quarters of respondents only occasionally or rarely socialise with people with a disability – and that lack of interaction has a profound impact.” – Taken from direct transcript of interview.

You can download the interview from this link (1.28MB)

➔ [www.abc.net.au/radio/programs/am/social-isolation-rife-among-people-with-a-disability/11731996](http://www.abc.net.au/radio/programs/am/social-isolation-rife-among-people-with-a-disability/11731996)



Inside ABC Studio



Don't be afraid to talk to us. We don't bite.

LISA HO

## ENGAGING IN EYE GAZE

ACCESS ALL LEARNING AREAS

*Free resources available for download!*

Thanks to a grant from the Non-Government Centre Support for Non-School Organisations (NGCS), Indigo Australasia (previously Independent Living Centre (ILC) WA) have been completing a project titled '**Engaging in Eye Gaze: Access All Learning Areas.**'

This project has explored the use of eye gaze technology to support student's engagement and achievement across a range of learning areas. Within the classroom, eye gaze technology has the potential to increase students' participation in classroom activities, with examples such as turning the pages and engaging with books, participating in literacy and numeracy lessons, creating art and music as well as giving access to vocabulary for communication. Eye gaze technology can also assist teachers to assess a students' knowledge and understanding when other methods such as writing, pointing or speaking an answer are difficult.

The project has been completed in two phases.

### PHASE ONE

Phase one involved providing Speech Pathology and Occupational Therapy support to two Perth based schools throughout semester 1, 2019. This included working with key staff and students and providing onsite training, set-up and support to use eye gaze technology.

### PHASE TWO

Phase two was completed in semester 2, 2019 and involved providing consultations to 4 schools based in Perth to share and discuss learnings from phase 1. A range of resources have also been developed. **These will be free to access via the Indigo Australasia website in December and include:**

- Student eye gaze workbook
- A handout on strategies for success (including information on the goal setting process)
- Video providing tips for successfully integrating eye gaze technology into the school setting
- Videos demonstrating the use of eye gaze software for English, Mathematics and the Arts
- Software handouts mapping specific activities to the eye gaze skills required and the WA curriculum code

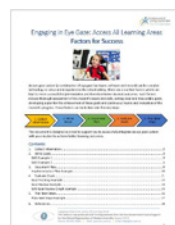


Indigo Australasia would like to thank NGCS for providing funding to complete this project and all the schools who took part.

→ [www.indigosolutions.org.au/resources/access-methods-for-technology/engaging-in-eye-gaze](http://www.indigosolutions.org.au/resources/access-methods-for-technology/engaging-in-eye-gaze)

TANITH BRIEN

AND MICHELLE LIDDICOAT





# AIF RESEARCH CORNER SUMMER 2020

## WHY IS CONNECTION ACROSS THE AAC COMMUNITY SO IMPORTANT?

By Dr Alison Moorcroft

In this edition of the Research Corner, we are going to focus on the importance of social and mentoring relationships between AAC communicators and also between family members of people who use AAC. There is a lot of research evidence that supports the 2019 AGOSCI Conference theme ‘Building Connections’ and the great work our AGOSCI AAC Communities Coordinators are doing in terms of making these connections happen!

### The benefits of mentoring for AAC communicators by AAC communicators:

- Research by Ballin, Balandin, and Stancliffe (2013) showed that after 12 mentoring sessions by an adult who uses a speech generating device (SGD), mentees used a wider variety of words in their own SGDs. The mentees also demonstrated improvements in their social communication skills such as taking conversational turns and initiating conversation (Ballin, Balandin, & Stancliffe, 2013).
- Mentors have reported additional benefits for their mentees including the opportunity to see successful AAC use, discuss shared experiences, learn insider tips and shortcuts, increase personal motivation, and build on their use of AAC outside of a clinical setting (Ballin et al., 2012).  
*A few years ago, I was helping speech therapists with a group of AAC communicators and we would all go to dinner and everybody would have to order using their device. This did two things; it got them out in the public and it helped to motivate them into using their device. (pg 67)*
- Mentors have also reported gaining satisfaction from helping people who are new to AAC. Two participants interviewed by Ballin et al. (2012) reported that the mentoring would provide recognition of their expertise in AAC and impact positively on their self-esteem.  
*Since I have been employed by the district, there have been a few students that did not want to use a device until I started working with them. It is very empowering for me to know that I have made a difference in their life. (pg 69)*

### The benefits of connection between the families of AAC communicators

- Speech pathologists have discussed the benefits of connecting parents of AAC communicators and have suggested that parents who are connected, either virtually or in person, are more likely to accept and use their child’s AAC system (Moorcroft, Scarinci, & Meyer, 2019). The participants reported that parents who are connected have the opportunity to hear consistent messages from a variety of people, be reassured about the absence of progress in their child, and be inspired by the progress of others to encourage them to commence or persist with AAC themselves.  
*They [the parents] hear about it [success with AAC] and so they’re quite committed to giving it a go to see if they can get that success with their child (pg 198).*
- Parents of children with complex communication needs have also highlighted the need for “positive peer pressure” in the form of face-to-face or virtual support groups consisting of other parents of similar children who can support and encourage each other to use AAC (Moorcroft, Scarinci, & Meyer, 2020). Parents interviewed by Marshall and Goldbart (2008) similarly highlighted the importance of parent connections: *Speaking to other parents as well who want to be contacted is incredibly useful because the best people for information are other parents who have been through it. (pg 91)*

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### Clinical Implications

Together, this research highlights the importance of building connections within the AAC community. These connections can be made at different Agosci events (e.g., AAC Awareness Month activities, conferences, National Tour) and via the work of our AAC Communities Coordinators and AAC User Representatives. However, we as speech pathologists, teachers, AAC communicators, and family members can also take action to create both informal and formal networks between different AAC communicators and family members we meet along our AAC journey.





## REFERENCES & FURTHER READING

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Marshall, J., & Goldbart, J. (2008). Communication is everything I think. Parenting a child who needs Augmentative and Alternative Communication AAC. *International Journal of Language and Communication Disorders*, 43(1), 77-98. doi:10.1080/13682820701267444

Moorcroft, A., Scarinci, N., & Meyer, C. (2019). Speech pathologist perspectives on the acceptance versus rejection or abandonment of AAC systems for children with complex communication needs. *Augmentative and Alternative Communication*, 35, 193-204.

Moorcroft, A., Scarinci, N., & Meyer, C. (2020). "We were just kind of handed it and then it was smoke bombed by everyone": How do external stakeholders contribute to parent rejection and abandonment of AAC systems? *International Journal of Language and Communication Disorders*, 55(1), 59-69.

## AGOSCI RESEARCH GRANT 2019



In 2019, AGOSCI awarded its second annual research grant to the value of \$1000 to support the growth of research which will contribute to enhanced outcomes and participation for people with complex communication needs. The executive would like to congratulate Abigail Lewis and Ruyi Tong on their receipt of this award.

Here is a sneak peak of the research they are conducting, which has a strong application to the current climate of services for people who use AAC in Australia and aligns closely with AGOSCI's vision:

The importance of including coursework in AAC as part of speech pathology students' training is growing (McNaughton et al., 2019). Speech Pathology Australia formally recognised the need to develop speech pathology students' AAC competency in 2011 through the inclusion of a Multimodal Communication range of practice in the Competency based Occupational standards (Speech Pathology Australia, 2011). Despite its inclusion, many new graduates feel unprepared to work with clients with Complex Communication Needs (CCN) and require Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) (Marvin, Montano, Fusco, & Gould, 2003). One contributing factor is the limited research exploring the fit between the design of AAC coursework (e.g. content, delivery, evaluation) and AAC practice needs of speech pathologists new to the AAC (Costigan & Light, 2010).

The aims of this project are to a) explore changes in final-year speech pathology students' AAC competencies between the start and end of a five-day AAC and disability intensive programme; b) explore the longer-term effects of the programme on students' AAC practice competencies through clinical placements within disability organisations in Western Australia; and c) explore the effects of students' supervised AAC interventions on AAC users, their families and professionals (e.g. supervising speech pathologists and other healthcare professionals).

Watch this space for updates on their work as it progresses.

## JOURNAL ARTICLE REVIEWS

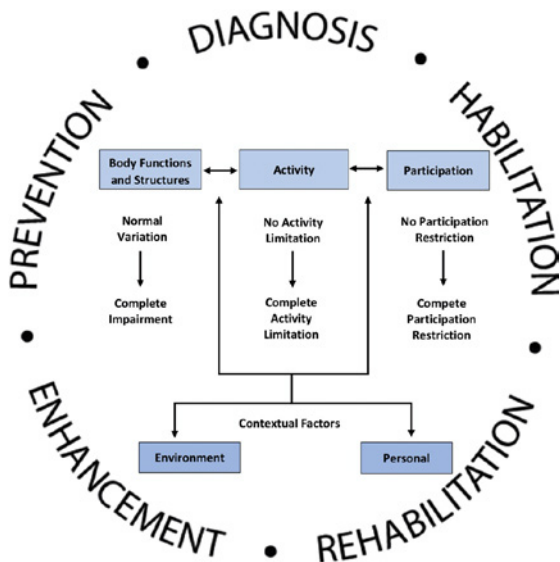
BY ANDY SMIDT

**McNeilly LG. (2018) Using the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health Framework to Achieve Interprofessional Functional Outcomes for Young Children: A Speech-Language Pathology Perspective. *Pediatr Clin North Am* 65: 125-134.**

The ICF is a conceptual framework from the World Health Organisation that provides a standard language for describing health and health-related states. The aim of the ICF is to facilitate consistent terminology between practitioners that includes a focus on functioning and participation. In this paper, McNeilly looks at how SLPs can use the ICF to create interprofessional functional outcomes.

In Australia currently, the climate for many SLPs is framed by the NDIS and the need to write functional goals in order to secure funding for their clients. This paper will assist clinicians to use the ICF to guide their goals which will ultimately lead to more functional outcomes. McNeilly describes functional goals as targeting participation in daily living environments across settings such as home, school and community. The focus is, therefore on succeeding in a range of everyday environments rather than focusing on changing the impairment or disorder. Goals are therefore not about how many correct speech sounds are produced, or the length of an utterance but on what these changes mean for the child in order for them to participate at home and at school.

In this paper, McNeilly (2018) provides an overview of the ICF and functional goals. She then provides a modified diagram of the ICF that includes diagnosis, habilitation, rehabilitation, enhancement and prevention. **Practitioners who are relatively new to the ICF will find this diagram helpful.**



The paper then goes on to explore using the ICF for people with communicating disorders. The author suggests that the Pediatric Evaluation of Disability Inventory (PEDI) is a tool that can be used to assess children as they participate in daily functioning to capture the key concepts of the ICF. She goes on to suggest that the PEDI can be used to measure **capacity and performance** and that these concepts closely align with the ICF concepts.

Performance and capacity are key concepts in the ICF and McNeilly explores how we can use these concepts in SLP practice. She reviews research that has done this and explains how an integrative profile of communication performance (IPCP) can allow us to plan interventions that enhance communication performance. She explains that we need to assess more than just physiological and structural aspects of performance but also assess competencies and limitations for both the child and their communication partners.

McNeilly cites work by (Cunningham et al., 2017) who state that including a participation-based outcome assessment tool can provide clinicians with a bigger picture of how interventions impact both the child and family in their everyday lives. These authors also report that participation-based outcomes may be more meaningful to families and may assist in the development of functional goals using family-friendly language.

The final part of this paper is a description of Interprofessional practice (IPP) and service delivery. The author explains the principles of IPP and links the effectiveness of IPP to the ICF framework. She notes that using the ICF includes focusing on all aspects of the classification system which leads to more holistic assessment and goal writing.

Perhaps part of this paper that I found most useful are the links to pages on the ASHA website. McNeilly describes how ASHA Scope of Practice emphasises the need for SLPs to commit to using the ICF to evaluate treatment outcomes. This, of course, is also relevant for us here in Australia as SPA has similar guidelines. ASHA has developed some excellent resources on how to use the ICF framework with some examples of functional goals written using the ICF framework. I think these examples will be really valuable for clinicians so that they can model

their own goals on these exemplars. There are available at [www.asha.org/slp/icf](http://www.asha.org/slp/icf)

McNeilly concludes that the outcomes of all interventions should be functional and related to participation and this certainly concurs with current NDIS requirements. It is interesting to see how the ICF is now being embraced by clinicians as a way to ensure

the impact of their intervention includes meaningful, family-focused outcomes. McNeilly states that clinicians often overlook the ICF for its value in measuring the effectiveness of intervention. This paper will hopefully start to remedy that and to support clinicians to use the ICF meaningfully in their own practice.

**Emma Grace, Parimala Raghavendra, Julie M. McMillan & Jessica Shipman Gunson (2019): Exploring participation experiences of youth who use AAC in social media settings: impact of an e-mentoring intervention, Augmentative and Alternative Communication, DOI: 10.1080/07434618.2018.1557250**

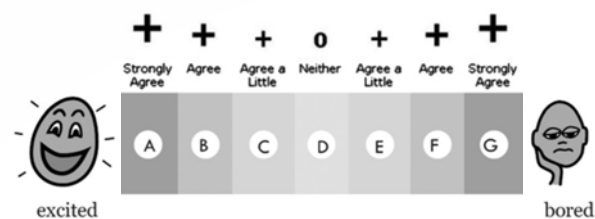
Participation is an important concept within the ICF (World Health Organization, 2001) and the Participation Model (Beukelman & Mirenda, 2013) and it is known that this is a challenging concept to realise for people who use AAC. This paper investigated a peer e-mentoring program on the reported participation outcomes of four young people who used AAC. Four young mentees were matched with two mentors who were also AAC users. Mentors were older than mentees and provided a model and supportive relationship. The selected mentors were all aged over 21, experienced AAC users who were confident users of the internet and social media.

Grace, Raghavendra, McMillan, and Gunson (2019) identified the design as “pre-experimental” because it was a small study which was really about proof of concept. The idea of a proof of concept study is to demonstrate that an intervention is effective before rolling it out to more people. In this paper they were not able to claim that the results would be meaningful for everyone but to gather some evidence prior to a bigger study.

Mentors were provided with training and a handbook that included information about their role as a mentor, safety, goals, relationship closure and evaluation. The study used the SEAS-PCS tool (A picture communication version of the Self-reported Experiences of Activity Settings) (Batorowicz, King, Vane, Pinto, & Raghavendra, 2017) to measure changes in participation before and after the program. The scale includes five domains; Personal Growth, Psychological Engagement, Social Belonging, Meaningful Interactions, and Choice and Control.

The authors state that a key finding was that participants reported positive experiences of Psychological Engagement, Social Belonging, and Choice and Control domains, with less positive scores that were less stable for the Personal Growth and Meaningful Interactions domains.

This study is the first to measure the impact of e-mentoring of peers in the social media space and it was the first to use the symbol version of the SEAS questionnaire to report before and after an intervention. It is clearly important to have validated scales that can be used with people who are symbol users



The authors specifically comment on how challenging it is to measure change in participation given the complexity of relationships between environmental and personal factors. They also note that a mixed method approach which includes both survey data and qualitative interviews may yield stronger results. Indeed, given the likely heterogeneity of their participants, it might have been very useful to gather their perspectives as well as their survey results.

This paper reports on a really interesting topic for AGOSCI members. Social media seems to be an accessible method of communication for those who use AAC. Social media is universally accessible and often involves only brief messages which might be easier for AAC users to produce. However, young AAC users might need mentoring in order to successfully navigate the different platforms and social etiquette required in online communications. This study sought to provide support to those who were new to social media. This study reported that e-mentoring relationships did change the participation experiences of mentees who were young albeit to varying degrees. The study provides additional evidence on one possible way to design interventions that support the participation of young people who use AAC.



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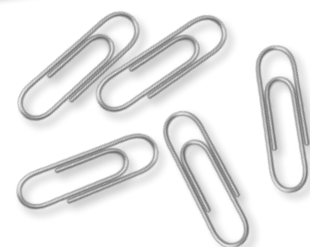
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InFOCUS

SUMMER 2020  
ISSUE 46 VOLUME 1

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

AGOSCI InFocus is an ISAAC affiliated publication.

