

AC World Network Newsletter April 2009.

Hello. Time to be in touch again. We have lots to share. I hope you find something useful and/or of interest in our newsletter. Please keep sending me your ideas, questions and AAC programme reports. It's a pleasure for me to be in touch with you all and to share your news. So, here's our April offering!

Disaster Preparedness for People with Complex Communication Needs (CCN)
No one likes to think of Complex Humanitarian Emergencies (CHE) but everyone should be prepared. In an RERC webcast Pamela Kennedy describes her experiences as an individual with complex communication needs and as a survivor of the Grand Forks flood of 1997– a follow up to the presentation she made in 2008 at the 'AAC and All That Jazz' conference in New Orleans. This webcast and the resources listed makes an enormous contribution to our knowledge of CHE's and direct attention to emergency preparedness. You can listen to Pamela's speech by clicking on her photograph on the RERC Home page. www.aac-rerc.org. The winter 2009 edition of SpeakUp, published by the United States Society for Augmentative and Alternative Communication (USSAAC), is a Disaster Preparedness edition. It contains ACNews, Vol 19 #4 2008, an edition that was dedicated to CHE's. SpeakUp also provides an emergency check lists in text and symbols, as well as check lists for first responders. And you will also find two wonderful symbol supported stories for children: Billy Builds a Kit Book 1 and Book 2 written by Pamela Kennedy. Please, if you read no further in this newsletter, for the safety of us all, listen to Pamela and read SpeakUp at <http://ussaac.org/speakup.html>

AAC Assessment:

Last month I was asked to include information on AAC assessment in our newsletter. By keying 'AAC, assessment,' and adding your own particular interest, for example, 'children', adults' Autism' into Google you will find many helpful references. Here are some of the references that I have been able find. They are not official endorsements but are reference thats I have found useful.

The Communication Matrix – Especially for Parents by Charity Rowlands is available online in both English and Spanish. This is a free service that is currently available to anyone. Communication Matrix is "user-friendly" and designed to be easier for family members to use. It consists of a 32-page booklet for entering information about the child's communication skills, and a separate profile for summarizing performance. Both parents and professionals enter information about a child's communication skills following which a list of the child's communication skills can be automatically generated for printing. Communication Matrix allows parents and professionals to directly compare communication data from home and school

environments. <http://online.sfsu.edu/~nancyr/assessment.html>

AAC Assessment in Early Intervention includes a number of domains, including prelinguistic communication, parent inventories, functional communication, and environmental analysis. Several tools are required for completion within the first months of AAC EI practicum. The programmes-mini web is designed to provide the resources needed to understand the usefulness of functional behavioural assessments and behavioural intervention plans in addressing student behaviour

problems. <http://cecp.air.org/fba/default.asp>

AAC Assessment from YAACK. If you like the sound of the following quotation from the YAACK website you may find their user-friendly AAC assessment meets your needs. Quote: “To determine the best AAC system for a child, it is necessary to conduct a comprehensive AAC assessment. This assessment needs to cover both characteristics of the child as well as the potential advantages and obstacles that exist in the environment. Ideally, it results in: 1) Deciding which of the child’s current methods of communicating should be maintained and/or developed further. 2) Selecting new methods of communication, and determining the best way to implement them and 3) Making changes and adaptations in the environment and in the way people interact with the child. <http://aac.unl.edu/yaack/c0.html>

The article referenced on the website below, “Nuts and Bolts of AAC”, is one section of a larger Scope publication: Supporting Communication through AAC. It has a broad perspective on the topic of AC assessment and provides information on the introduction, use and ongoing aspects of

AAC. http://www.scope.org.uk/downloads/aac/AACmod%2003_nuts&bolts.pdf

Augmentative Communication News Volume 7 # 1 addresses the question of AAC assessment. The publication provides the view of clinicians when they were asked to respond to a list of questions, tools and desired outcomes of AAC assessments.

Many thanks to Sarah. We can all read this copy of AC News

at http://augcominc.com/index.cfm/article_7_1_aac_assessment.htm

Thanks to Alicia Garcia (Canada) for the following reference. The Mission of the Wisconsin Assistive Technology Initiative is to assist school districts and Birth to 3 programs in their responsibility to ensure that every child in Wisconsin who may need assistive technology (AT) has equal and timely access to appropriate assessment and the provision and implementation of needed AT devices and services. Assessing Students’ Needs for Assistive Technology: A Resource Manual for School District Teams is an extensive manual developed by the WATI during the past fifteen years. The manual contains evaluation information, evaluation forms, bibliography and references. Access the manual directly

at <http://www.wati.org/content/supports/free/pdf/ASNAT4thEditionDec08.pdf>

News from around the world.

Beijing China, from Nadia Browning.

Following an intense search for AAC (Augmentative and Alternative Communication) in Beijing, I finally got involved with a team in pediatric neurohabilitation Clinic at the First Hospital of Peking University. The team was composed of Physiotherapist, Occupational Therapist, Speech and Language Pathologist, and a specialist who evaluate the child's psychomotor development and psychological test. This team was lead by a developmental psychoneurologist, Dr Li Ming.

At first, I presented a 3hrs seminar on AAC at the hospital. Dr Li Ming was the one who translated from Chinese to English and vice-versa. Some participants seemed to understand English by nodding and smiling. Following this event, we agreed that to further the practical understanding of AAC, we would see children in a case study format. The main goal was to enhance the team's abilities to provide consultation to parent of a child with developmental delayed in the area of play and communication. The children seen presented different diagnosis such as: cerebral palsy, developmental delay, and autism. The visits focused on discussing (1) concepts of interaction between child and parent, (2) the need to expect and provide opportunities for the child to participate and (3) on how to involve the child in active play.

The child and his/her parent would come into a room in the clinic and the clinician familiar to the case would provide me with the information on the child. After identifying the questions (need) we would discuss the suggestions. Usually, positioning of the child was the first to be addressed. Following, we discussed the idea and provided options for active play. With the basic information on the parent and child's routine, we identified situations that play could happen. During play, I included concepts of early communication such as identifying and "decoding" the child's communication attempts, and expecting the child to respond. The group was very interested and as these case studies continued, some carried over took place.

Unfortunately I had to leave Beijing after 4 visits.

My biggest challenge was to learn how could I get a sense for their understanding of what I was saying. Asking for questions and feedback is not common practice for the Chinese, a hierarchy society with a belief that information is learned better when thought in a lecture format. Additionally, the body language changes with each culture and is not different for the Chinese. It was a great learning opportunity for me.

News from India from Usha Dalvi.

Usha has sent us an excellent report of the recent conference that she and her colleagues organized in Mumbai – a very impressive occasion and great planning for the future. The report is lengthy and will be added to this news letter as an attachment. Thank you, Usha.

News from Peru from Dana Corfield.

I'm actually in Peru at the moment and will likely be here for some time. I'm living in a small town south of the capital (Lima) and have been very excited to start some AAC work in the area. I had a very exciting moment last week when we were able to register a 5 year girl with Cerebral Palsy (who is nonverbal and recently started to use AAC) at the local public school. She starts school next week with all the other 5 year olds and I think I'm more excited than anyone! In the past, it has been VERY difficult to get any children with disabilities included in local schools (we've even had a hard time getting special ed schools to accept students with CP), and it has been next to impossible to get AAC users into the school system. The director of this local public school is wonderful and very open and I think this will be a wonderful experience for everyone (although it may be a bumpy road at times).

News from Brazil from Dianne Martins.

Together with Rita Bersch, we are supporting the Education Ministry (MEC) in consultancy, in the politics of inclusive education with the organization of resource rooms for specialized educational services.

At the moment, the AT service is being organized from the demand presented in the resource rooms and it does the assessment and indicates the needs in AT to support the students in the daily challenges of learning.

The teachers participate of hands-on and distance training programs and at the moment every brazilian region has received some training and materials.

The ISAAC international meeting in Brazil was a historical landmark and the presence of MEC in the event broadened the comprehension of AT in the context of education, specially of AAC. Since 2004 we are directly involved with MEC and working in the training programs and structuring the AT services in education.

Florianópolis is a reference city in the specialized educational service and in teachers training in AT. So, the idea is to implement there a model service in AT together with an interdisciplinary team and, to have the resources to do so. Also to research and publish the results from case studies.

So we are looking for material either in print or equipment to start the service with the assessment of students in communication and computer access, and to implement the use of such resources in schools and community indicating to MEC the acquisition of the most appropriate tools for the student's needs and contexts.

There's still a long path ahead towards the inclusion of students with disabilities in regular schools settings and in their access to assistive technology, but this movement has started and many people are getting involved in this cause.

AAC in Guatemala: for Caroline Musselwhite.

Caroline and Janet Moro will be going to Guatemala in August to support developing AAC services in that country. If anyone knows AAC colleagues or contacts in

Guatemala, AAC resources in Spanish, ideas for funding to cover Caroline and Janet's travel expenses for this voluntary undertaking please let me know or contact Caroline directly at carmusel@cox.net Thanks.

All About Starting a Blog. A big Thank You to Daianne Martins for sharing this information. Good luck Dianne with your Brazilian Blog. What a great idea! The idea about starting a blog came up from being a reader of some international blogs in the fields of assistive technology, AAC and Special Education and from being a masters student in Design and Technology at Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul. And from this point of finding interesting resources and also trying some (as there are some tools for download), I thought I had to share all this information bringing ideas to teachers, therapists, designers, families, etc to be developed in Brazil.

The idea also came from the lack of information and Brazilian websites. The main objectives of the blog are):

- To promote assistive technology so more people with disabilities have access to these resources and services;
- To post news about AT products, tools, studies, prototypes, courses, etc;
- To develop an interdisciplinary approach in AT so people from different areas can get engaged in the field;
- To help teachers, therapists, families and potential users in the identification of resources and services according to their needs.
- To contribute to the expansion of AT in Brazil illustrating national and international initiatives.

This is my first attempt in starting a blog so I don't have much practice with the layout stuff. What I did was getting a model layout from Blogspot and inserting text. I'll try to improve it in the future.

It has being very pleasant to find ideas, to post them and to receive comments. This way I also feel like writing. This is something I didn't have much practice and now I feel more confident writing about an area I really enjoy.

Picture Communication System (Mayer Johnson)

If you use Boardmaker you will love this website where PCS worksheets can be downloaded and shared. Worksheets are being shared on every topic: for example, Wh questions, Penguins, 3-4 word sentences, grocery sorting, festivals and holidays and even President Obama! Do sign on and look around. A wonderful way to share worksheets from different parts of the world.

<http://www.adaptedlearning.com/>

Bedtime Reading:

AC World Network is supporting the emergence of AAC in many countries. But it's good to remember that AAC itself has emerged over the past forty years. Was there really a voice output device as big as a kitchen cupboard? Gregg Vanderheiden, one of the people at the forefront of AAC training and assistive technology development, has written an interesting article on the history of AAC. You can read about equipment and original beliefs that have changed and other AAC intervention ideas that remain as valid today as they were many years ago. <http://www.rehab.research.va.gov/jour/02/39/6/sup/vanderheiden.html>

Harvey's Place

Thanks to Harvey, whose excellent web spotting skills have added the following sites to the resources in our newsletter:

<http://www.dinf.ne.jp/doc/english/asia/resource/apdrj/z13jo0400/z13jo0405.html>

An article which describes AAC in India.

<http://www.fxc.btinternet.co.uk/assistive.htm> has free software, primarily relating to visual impairment.

<http://commtechlab.msu.edu/sites/aslweb/browser.htm> This website has a long list of words on the right side, and when you click on a word a video displays how to say that word in American Sign Language (ASL). It's free and could be useful for those who need to communicate with people who sign.

<http://www.pacer.org/parent/php/php-c35s.pdf> A site with AAC and disability information sheets in Spanish.

<http://www.speechville.com/augmentative-communication/aac-videos.html> offers videos demonstrating the use of AAC.

http://www.setbc.org/Download/LearningCentre/Communication/AAC_Guide_V4_Revise_2008.pdf

A guide book from SET-BC, a Canadian organization whose staff enhance student opportunities by providing access to curriculum through the use of educational and communication technologies.

That's it for this month. Please keep your information requests coming in. Our next newsletter will be in June. Back to you all then. Best wishes. Anne.

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