



Communication Support World Network Newsletter

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www.centralcoastchildrensfoundation.org

In our final issue for 2016, we feature articles about important progress in a variety of areas where communication supports for people with disabilities are getting greater attention, including large nations like China and Russia and smaller areas like Sri Lanka and Tanzania. We found especially encouraging the way specialists in Poland are helping to support the development of AAC in Russia (“Influence of the Caritas Educational Centre for Social Services on AAC Development in Russia”). We also bring news of important cutting-edge work currently being carried out at the Bridge School in California, and of the Bridge School’s tenth Teacher-in-Residence. As usual, we have scoured the Internet for information about new resources that are now available for both families and professionals.

[Note from Dot:]

*In our introduction to the June 2014 edition of our newsletter we referred to The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Disabled People, a statement of the human rights of all disabled people and covers all areas of life. **Governments must report on how they will promote, protect, and monitor its implementation:***

<http://www.centralcoastchildrensfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/03/ACWN-June-2014.pdf>

I have now received a question from Romania (an emerging AAC nation). They would like me to collect information from other nations on how their governments are implementing the Convention in relation to supplying AAC/ AT (they want me to include this in my presentation at the ECEAAC conference in Bucharest July 2017). Please send information to dotfraser2@gmail.com.

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ARTICLES

Opening Employment Opportunities in Tanzania: Kazi ni Uhai

Harriet Smith, Connects Autism, Tanzania
Cory Ybarra, Building for Generations, USA



Connects Autism Tanzania (CA Tanzania) is an NGO founded by a Tanzanian mother who has a son with autism. Since October 2016, three students from Norei Primary School Special Needs Unit have enrolled in the new CA Tanzania youth employment programme, *Kazi ni Uhai* (“Work is Life”).

Too often in Tanzania, begging or prostitution are the only options for a young adult with a disability. However, *Building for Generations*, a non-profit in California, recently received a matching grant from the *Central Coast Children’s Foundation (CCCCF)* to establish a job coaching and placement program for students who are graduating from the Norei Primary School.



To initiate the transition process for these students, Harriet, an intern at CA Tanzania, designed an assessment, training, and outreach program that would enable students to develop employable skills and also would empower the staff to identify desirable jobs and potential employers. To begin the process, Harriet, Emmanuel and Mama Grace (CA Tanzania staff members) met with teachers and some students at the primary school. They asked the teachers to describe the progress their students were making during a summer vocational training programme at the Norei Primary School. The CA staff then explained the *Kazi ni Uhai programme* and how they planned to implement it over the next 12 months.

Emmanuel is the CA Tanzania Job Coach. He is observing each student’s daily routine, learning about their behaviour and building relationships with them. He is also supporting them in the kitchen, on school grounds, and doing janitorial work. Harriet is the Project Manager.

Three students are already participating in the program: Lothi, Jacqueline, and Kelvin. Harriet and Emmanuel visited each



student's home to introduce themselves and explain the programme.

- At Jacqueline's house, they met with her Bibi (grandmother) and daughter.
- At Kelvin's house they met with his grandmother.
- At Lotti's house, they met with Mama Loti and his younger brother Denis.

Jackeline is already working independently in the kitchen at school, serving food to the students, cleaning dishes and cooking. She seems to enjoy kitchen work, and says she would like to continue this type of work but it needs to be closer to her home so she doesn't have to travel too far.

Kelvin is working with two other students who are cleaning, serving food and washing dishes. He also washes the teachers' cars every few days at the school. Kelvin is very interested in washing cars for a job.



Lotti was absent from school for a few days so Emmanuel visited his home to see if he was OK. He bought Lotti and his mother some clothes as well as some bags of food. Lotti is now better and back at school. Lotti says he is particularly interested in working in gardening or farming.

Harriet has made promising headway speaking to potential employers and has met with various businesses in areas surrounding the school and students' homes. She has received very positive responses from restaurants and hotels and is now finalizing details so their students to start their transition to work in the New Year.

The CA Tanzania staff are also working to develop a training plan that ensures that the students will develop the skills they need for the work place.

Everyone is excited about the months ahead. The program will also provide a stipend for these students as they begin their journey to a positive future life.



Early Intervention Programs in Russia

by Natalia Baranova, Orange Penguin Foundation, Russia

Early childhood intervention programs in Russia have spanned a short 20-year history. The *St. Petersburg Early Intervention Institute*, a non-profit governmental organization, initiated the development of this field in Russia in the early 1990's. Early intervention programs have filled an empty niche because *no* programs for young children with disabilities had ever existed before. Rather, most children with disabilities were placed into residential institutions. Those who stayed in their families did not receive professional assistance. Thus, parents who kept their children at home had to cope with their own personal grief while trying to raise their child as best they could. They had to play the role of therapist for themselves and their child.

Before the 1990s, all children with disabilities were divided into two groups: "educatable" and "non-educatable", and the system of supports were geared toward children with very mild disorders. "Non-educable" often meant that children were placed in institutions where only their basic needs were met. Although "defectological" (correctional education) organizations have existed in Russia for years, these organizations only assisted in rehabilitating and educating children *older* than 3-4 years of age, and the role of professionals was to "correct the defects". The role for parents was secondary.

The *St. Petersburg Early Intervention Institute* based their model of early intervention (EI) services on a family-centered, interdisciplinary approach. From 1992 to 2003, these



EI programs were supported by St. Petersburg's city administration. Initially, the focus was on exercise and mastering EI methods, but later on, the focus shifted to developing local habilitation services in children's polyclinics, and testing and disseminating the service model. The EI programs model was built on several basic principles. EI programs should: (1) be family centered, (2) provide services by an interdisciplinary team, which consists of therapists, psychologists and teachers, (3) focus on the strengths of family and child and (4) form positive images of children with disabilities and their parents.

These EI programs aimed to provide

professional support to the entire family, because young children are inseparable from their family. Giving parents direct support allows families to keep their children with disabilities at home instead of placing them in institutions. It also provides children with an environment that is optimal for development and normalization of life.

Changing the environment and normalizing the life of children with disabilities has gradually become one of the fundamental values and principles of all EI programs and has helped shift goals away from the defectological paradigm – “to correct a defect”. The EI goals provide parents with support so they can provide optimal conditions for a child’s development and education within the context of family and local community. For example, goals do not separate motor from speech skills, but rather focus on developing *functional* movement and communication. Strategies to meet goals now include the use of alternative and augmentative communication (AAC) methods and other assistive technologies.

The development of interdisciplinary approaches also requires the formation of teams, which led to the emergence of new specialties and fields of professional knowledge. New specialties, such as physical therapy and ergotherapy (occupational therapy) are being developed at the Early Intervention Institute. Also, the focus on functional communication skills has led to the development of alternative and augmentative communication as a new field in Russia.

Team building also requires that therapists have time to engage in a maximum amount of collaborative therapy and group discussions/meetings. It is important for specialists not only to carry out treatment together, but also to present their clinical cases, discuss problems, complexities and successes, and exchange professional knowledge and skills. Team participation in seminars and joint educational events enables specialists from multiple specialty areas to form common ideologies, use common terminology, and share their unique knowledge, approaches and methods.



Based on the St. Petersburg early intervention model, EI centers are now established across Russia in Archangelsk, Novgorod, Kaliningrad, Pskov, Moscow and Leningrad regions, Krasnoyarsk and Khabarovsk territories, Tomsk, and some other regions. Some EI services are provided through the healthcare system; others are provided within the

education system or the social protection system. The interest in EI programs has grown rapidly as positive results are reported for both children and their families. In addition, new approaches are being successfully implemented. One problem area is that doctors, teachers, psychologists and speech therapists work for different agencies: healthcare, education or social protection systems. Although each system tries to adopt some EI principles and methods, distortion of EI principles can result and the quality of services may decrease.

Services created by non-governmental organizations or organizations that function outside existing systems often enjoy more freedom in establishing the comprehensive interdisciplinary approach required because they are more able to balance components of existing medical, educational, and social systems.

In February 2016, a document written by a group of experts, entitled *The Concept of the Development of Early Intervention Programs in the Russian Federation till 2020*, received support from the Council on Social Protection Issues at the Government of Russian Federation. This document specifies: (1) the development of a regulatory legal and methodical base for the organization of early intervention services, (2) the transition from local single models of early intervention services to the creation of a common system of early intervention for children and their families, and (3) creating the conditions for EI programs across all regions of the Russian Federation.

Bridge School Selects New Teacher in Residence

Harvey Pressman, CCCF, USA

Carmen Valcu, a speech therapist and special education teacher from Bucharest, Romania, has been selected as the next Bridge School Teacher in Residence and will join the staff of the Hillsborough, California school in January, 2017. Carmen was chosen from an elite group of applicants from over ten different countries. She has been active for several years in promoting AAC awareness and use through her work with pupils in mainstream and special education, by attending and presenting at national and international conferences, and by sharing her knowledge with other teachers, therapists and families.



Carmen applied for the residency program because she wants to gain new skills in the field of augmentative and alternative communication (AAC), so she can maximize the potential of every child she interacts with and learn new ways of approaching daily

communication difficulties. Her motivation also springs from a desire to make AAC known, along with the methods of implementation, to other professionals in Romania, to parents and families, and to others who interact with these children.

She plans to disseminate the AAC information and skills she accumulates by participating in conferences, organizing workshops, creating a social networking platform page (such as Facebook) dedicated to the AAC community, and engaging in activities in Bucharest and other parts of Romania. She also hopes to develop and expand her international connections.

Sarah Blackstone, a Bridge School board member and the originator of the residency idea some two decades ago, sees Carmen as a worthy successor to the outstanding group of individuals who have preceded her in this role and then gone on to help make impressive progress in AAC in their home countries. When she learned of Carmen's appointment, Blackstone commented: "Carmen will be a wonderful addition to the growing Teacher in Residence family, who are fostering awareness of AAC across the world every day. From their experiences at the Bridge School, followed by the ongoing connections they maintain with school staff, with each other and with the broad international AAC community, the Bridge School TIRs are demonstrating every day that children with significant challenges can learn, communicate effectively, and participate actively in their families and communities."

Bridge School is a "lighthouse" school designed to help children with severe speech and physical impairments achieve full participation in their communities through the use of AAC and assistive technology (AT) applications. The School's mission is also to influence improvements in services for such children worldwide through the development, implementation and dissemination of innovative life-long educational strategies. The Bridge School has become an internationally recognized leader in the education of children who use AAC and has developed unique programs and trained highly skilled professionals in the use of state of the art assistive technology.

The International Teacher-in-Residence program was established in 1997 to expand the outreach efforts of Bridge School and to impact the education of children with severe physical and speech impairments throughout the world. Every other year a professional from a country where training in the use of AAC is limited or nonexistent is selected to come to The Bridge School for 4 to 10 months, to work alongside Bridge staff in the classrooms, attend classes at the university, participate in professional conferences and visit other programs serving children and adults with communication challenges.

This program furthers the Bridge School's mission of disseminating effective teaching and communication strategies to the global community by providing training and promoting skill development to an individual who is committed to disseminating what

they have learned during their residency when they return to their home country. The specialty training opportunity at The Bridge School enables the individual to return to their country and promote the use of AAC for children/adults currently being underserved.

The success of this program is evident in the progress made in educating children with special needs in India, Poland, Singapore, Mexico, South Africa, South Korea and, now, Romania. The Teachers-in-Residence have worked to change the culture and educational practices in their home country, conducted research, published articles, organized workshops and conferences, consulted with families and educators. Several have become active not only in their home country, but also in surrounding regions as well.

More about some of the early recipients can be found in past *Augmentative Communication News* newsletters, including:

http://www.augcominc.com/newsletters/index.cfm/newsletter_48.pdf.

Daring to Dream - CAAC Hosts Annual Fofa Communication Empowerment Programme

by Kerstin Tonsing, University of Pretoria, South Africa

If you think a room of eight young people who are unable to speak is a quiet place, you would be sorely mistaken. The participants of this year's Fofa Communication Empowerment Programme conclusively proved this when a spontaneous music and dance session evolved from one of the workshop activities. The eight young adults each had a turn to take centre stage and express themselves by dancing and vocalising to their favourite song.



The Fofa Programme, which began in September 2005 and is the first of its kind in Africa, is based on a similar programme, *Augmentative Communication and Empowerment Supports (ACES)*, developed by Prof Diane Bryen at Temple University in Philadelphia, USA. Fofa is the Sesotho word for 'to fly' or 'to soar'. Young adults with severe communication disabilities ages 19 to 35 years attended a yearly training week at the University of Pretoria (UP) aimed at improving their communication competence and empowering them.

This year's Fofa participants came from five provinces, including four who had not taken part before, two returning participants and two alumni of the programme who acted as mentors. All the participants have severe communication disabilities. Many come from disadvantaged backgrounds and have experienced a lack of agency and self-determination. Together with their personal assistants, they were hosted at the University

from 18–24 September, 2016. The participants engaged in daily workshops, presentations and social activities aimed at encouraging them to optimize their use of augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) and to start voicing their own dreams and hopes for the future.

The week started off with an AAC systems checks and optimization. Much of the remainder of the week was spent on a series of workshops by staff of the UP's [Centre for Augmentative and Alternative Communication](#) (CAAC) under the banner, 'Daring to dream', whereby participants were encouraged to express and visualize their 'big dream' – the one life goal most important to them at the moment. Their dreams ranged from professional training, employment and career choices to entrepreneurial business ventures. Participants were then also encouraged to put action plans in place to assist them in working towards the fulfilment of their dreams, and to complete at least the first step during the week.

Mr. Ramari Booi from Khano Consulting Services gave an engaging presentation on how to navigate the job market, alerting participants to various forms of employment and income-generating opportunities. On Wednesday, participants hit the streets of Hatfield to have lunch at Wimpy – a learning experience for some of the participants, as they ordered their own meals for the first time, and certainly a learning experience for many of the Wimpy staff, who took the orders they placed using AAC devices and strategies.



FOFA participants sharing their dreams and goals

On Friday, 23 September, participants shared their dreams, goals and insights with an open audience, using their AAC devices. They convinced their audience that although they may have difficulty speaking they have many ambitious dreams and goals for their lives and are fully determined to reach them. In spite of the challenges that many of them have faced, they are determined to spread their wings and fly.

Note: *Daring to Dream: Turning Dreams into Future Realities* was developed by Professor Emerita Diane Nelson Bryen. See Bryen, D. N. (2012). **Daring to Dream: Turning Dreams into Future Realities**. Amazon, Kindle Edition <http://www.amazon.com/dp/B008O5BKHU>

See also

Bryen, D.N., Sleseransky, G. & Baker, D. (1995). **Augmentative Communication and Empowerment Supports: A Look at Outcomes**. *Augmentative and Alternative Communication*, 11 (2).)

Follow this link to learn more: http://www.universityofpretoria.co.za/en/centre-for-augmentative-alternative-communication/news/post_2367128-daring-to-dream-caac-hosts-annual-fofa-communication-empowerment-programme.

AAC on the Rise in China

by Deanna Morrow, St. Paul Minnesota Schools, USA

AAC is on the rise in China. There is a significant and growing interest in promoting communication using AAC principles, strategies and materials. Education centers for children with special needs are springing up around the country, and teachers, therapists and others are excited to learn more about effective teaching and communication strategies.

The Fifth China International Conference on Speech Therapy was held in Beijing, China on September 10-11, 2016. Deanna Morrow, M.S. CCC-SLP of the St. Paul Public Schools in Minnesota, USA, Linnea McAfoose, M.A. CCC-SLP from TobiiDynavox, and Helen McCabe, Ph.D., from TobiiDynavox and The Five Project for International Autism and Disability Support all presented information about AAC at this conference.



Deanna Morrow presenting at the Fifth China International Conference on Speech Therapy

On the first day, Deanna Morrow presented a session entitled “Augmentative and Alternative Communication: Common Misconceptions, Effective Supports, and Implications in China and the USA.” She discussed research conducted with colleagues Dr. Mo Chen and Dr. Jolene Hyppa-Martin at the University of Minnesota.



Linnea McAfoose (right) and Helen McCabe presenting about autism and AAC

On the second day of the conference, Linnea McAfoose, and Helen McCabe presented a session entitled, “Augmentative and Alternative Communication for Children with Autism: Lessons for Chinese Professionals.” This presentation was based on their ongoing work providing hands-on training and support to teachers and families of children and young adults with autism in various cities in China, including Dalian, Donggang, Shanghai, *etc.*



Deanna Morrow presenting on AAC to parents and teachers of children with autism in Beijing, (9/16)

Deanna also gave a lecture in Beijing to 70 parents and teachers of children with autism, entitled *Supporting Communication Skills Using Evidence-Based Practices*. The lecture introduced basic AAC concepts and strategies for promoting communication in children with limited verbal speech. It was very enriching to be able to exchange ideas and experiences with these parents and teachers.



Linnea McAfoose and Helen McCabe introducing teachers to a hi-tech AAC device.

Linnea McAfoose and Helen McCabe spent several days working with teachers at educational centers in Beijing. Teachers were eager to learn more about how to implement AAC.

Speech Therapist Initiates New Communication Supports in Singapore Hospital

Written with Xueta Ying, Tan Tock Seng Hospital, Singapore



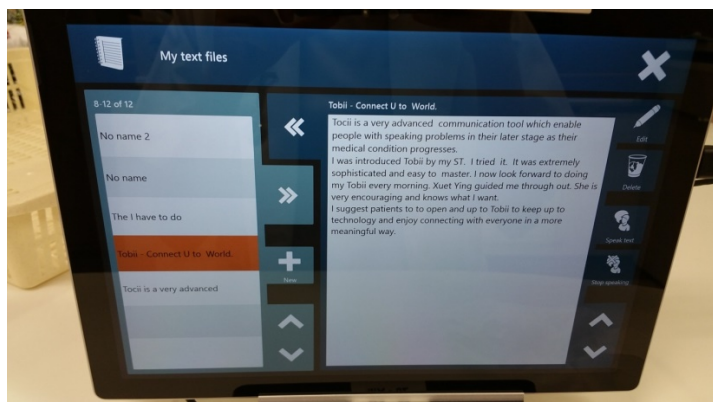
This past summer, Xueta Ying, a Speech Therapist at Tan Tock Seng Hospital in Singapore, embarked on a month-long learning journey through Canada and the United States. She began her expedition with observations at the *I CAN Centre for Assistive Technology*, Glenrose Rehabilitation Hospital in Edmonton, Alberta. Then, she moved on to the 2016 ISAAC Biennial Conference and the AAC clinic at Hotel Dieu Shaver Health and Rehabilitation Centre in Toronto. In the United States, Xueta Ying visited The Stony Brook University New Horizons in the AAC field. Xueta Ying was "awed" by the presentations on patient provider communication at the ISAAC Conference in Toronto where she met experts like John Costello and Sarah Blackstone.

In New York, she also met up with Tami Altschuler, Director of Patient Provider Communication at New York University's Langone Medical Center. She was deeply inspired by how effectively Tami advocates for her patients in an acute hospital setting. They discussed various ways of pushing through changes in the hospital so all patients can communicate effectively.

Xuet Ying returned to Singapore where she is already implementing many ideas gathered during her trip. She has already:

- 1) Shared information with her Speech Therapy Department and the ALS multidisciplinary team about her observations.
- 2) Created a heightened awareness of AAC use in the hospital setting, which has sparked an increase in referrals for AAC intervention for patients. In fact, an average of 10 patients each week are now being seen for AAC supports.
- 3) Helped the Speech Department extend their repertoire of AAC tools beyond simple picture/word charts. Now patients are able to use switches and eye gaze devices.
- 4) Helped her department purchase four sets of eye gaze devices, which are now being set up for ALS and tracheostomy patients to borrow beginning in January 2017. One patient with ALS was recently admitted and started using the eye gaze device on the wards. (See picture below of patient sharing her thoughts.)
- 5) Supported collaboration among speech-language pathologists and doctors, nurses and other allied health professionals in a clinical improvement project that is introducing AAC in the ICU.
- 6) Joined an upcoming clinical improvement project, spearheaded by nurses. The goal is to enhance communication and engagement in the general wards using AAC approaches.
- 7) Supported a doctor who just received a research grant regarding the use of AAC in the ICU. They will work together, write up research questions and prepare a proposal for ethics submission.
- 8) Met with others in Singapore to consider setting up an AAC Special Interest Group in Singapore during 2017.
- 9) Planned to do a presentation at her upcoming hospital conference in order to advocate for "communication access for all."

Regarding her trip, Xuet Ying observed: "I went eager to learn as much as I could and I learned far more than I could have imagined. I am really excited with the new developments and all the possibilities AAC can bring to people's lives – changing the entire mind-set and attitude of patients and health-care providers. I am now looking forward to a more inclusive community, with communication access for all".



Patient's message is retyped in sidebar

Tobii is a very advanced communication tool which enable people with speaking problems in their later stage as their medical condition progresses. I was introduced Tobii by my ST. I tried it. It was extremely sophisticated and easy to master. I now look forward to doing my Tobii every morning. Xueta Ying guided me through out. She is very encouraging and knows what I want. I suggest patients to open and up to Tobii to keep up to technology and enjoy connecting with everyone in a more meaningful way.

Implementing AAC in Sri Lanka: The Case of Razeen

with Nimisha Mutiah, University of Kelaniya, Sri Lanka

Nimisha Mutiah, a recent Ph.D. grad from Penn State, has returned to her native Sri Lanka. She is working at the University of Kelaniya in Colombo. Although she has been back for only a few months, she has begun to see significant progress in the children and families she is working with. She reports:

I have been working with a little boy diagnosed with ASD who had very little functional speech when I first started working with him. Now, three months later, thanks to AAC he has made great progress and is communicating and using his verbal speech more often. I asked his mom to write something about the difference exposure to AAC over 3 months has made in her son's life and the life of their family. Here are her thoughts, in her own words:

AAC Gave Our Son a Voice

Our son Razeen (8 years) was diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) in 2011. At the time of diagnosis he was nonverbal and said just a few names of animals and food items occasionally. He communicated his needs by taking an adult's hand and using it to point at what he wanted, or by leading an adult to the desired item. If the adult failed to understand him, he would end up having a meltdown.

When Razeen was about four years old I printed and started using pictures of common food items, family members and basic needs. I attached them on a communication board

at home. This board had an “I want” picture strip onto which he attached the picture of the item he wanted. By the age of five he was requesting some of the pictures on the board, although he still wasn’t verbalizing. A few months after he turned seven, he began to request verbally for the first time. This was, however, limited to just a few food items. He would repeatedly say the name of the item until it was given to him.

Between the ages of 3 and 7, Razeen had received speech therapy from different speech and language therapists. However, augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) was never suggested as an option for him by any of them. In mid 2016, we met an SLP who recommended the use of AAC for Razeen, specifically the GoTalk app on the iPad. My family and I were trained on how to program using the app. After a few hours, we had programmed a number of pages and words for Razeen to use. Within weeks, Razeen verbally called me and other family members appropriately by name.



For the first time in seven years I heard my son call me “mommy”. He also started verbally requesting food, movies, and other things using short sentences as “spoken” via the voice output of the iPad.

It was almost like he had been waiting to hear sentences from a device before he could start verbalizing them. He has also started to use words like “hi”, “bye”, “more”, “finished” and “help” in appropriate contexts. We have also noticed that he has consistently been saying new words that we also had programmed onto the GoTalk. Razeen is showing more interest in words and is much more eager to read now.

Thanks to AAC we are hopeful that Razeen’s communication will continue to improve. We look forward to promising times ahead.

In so many countries like Sri Lanka, children like Razeen need only to make a connection with someone who knows how to provide appropriate communication supports in order for them to take several communication giant steps. We can hope that the kind of progress already demonstrated in a few of the world’s most advanced industrial nations can spread to the tens of millions of people who still lack exposure to its benefits, as more and more areas begin to learn about and implement AAC.

The Eyes Have It: Instructional Innovations for Students with Cortical Visual Impairment at the Bridge School

By Aileen Arai, Janelle Moynihan, and Caitlin Sale, The Bridge School, USA

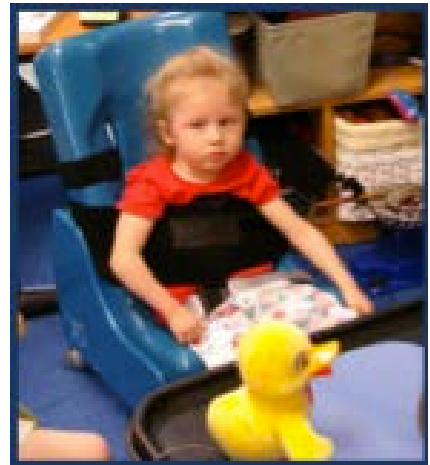
Many people are unaware of the extent to which children with significant physical disabilities and communication impairments struggle to deal with the sometimes hidden disability of cortical visual impairment. At the Bridge School, we have created an innovative instructional program to support these kids to learn, communicate, play, move about, explore and develop language concepts. In this article we will try to share some of what we have done and what we have learned.



Background

The Bridge School serves students with severe speech and physical impairments (SSPI) and complex communication needs (CCN), ages 3-14 years. Our mission is for all students to have the opportunity to achieve their maximal potential, to express feelings and share knowledge, to participate in his or her own learning and to access a functional and flexible communication system.

At least 50% of our student body has a diagnosis of cortical visual impairment (CVI). In 2012, we began consulting with Christine Roman-Lantzy, a vision specialist, CVI evaluator and teacher of the visually impaired. With her help, special education teachers and speech-language pathologists at the Bridge School have learned to administer The CVI Range, a vision assessment specifically for children with CVI. The range spans from 0 (no functional vision) to 10 (typical or near-typical visual function). Based on assessment results, the staff implements appropriate accommodations and interventions, including a literacy plan, and communication methodologies, materials, and devices specifically for students with CVI.

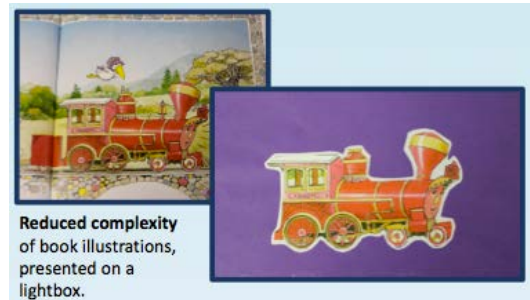


Case Study of Abigail

The CVI Range assessment and resulting accommodations and interventions have helped Abigail significantly improve her visual functioning over the last 4 years at the Bridge School. When first tested in 2013, Abigail scored 4.75 on The CVI Range. Although socially engaged with peers and

adults, she showed little interest in classroom materials and limited understanding of common objects. Following her assessment, our primary strategy was to reduce the complexity of the objects and images presented to her and allow her the extra time and supports she needed to understand what she was seeing.

Our interventions included computers and high-tech devices as well as strategies to simplify visual information and low-tech and no-tech AAC strategies. For example, we reduced distracting backgrounds on both Abigail's computer workspace and book illustrations so she could easily focus on the important features of the visual information. We presented brightly colored images on dark backgrounds so they stood out and allowed Abigail extra time to view them while highlighting key visual features to help her identify the object in the future. Finally, we taught Abigail the visual features of letters using a lightbox, which consists of dark images on a bright white background. We traced letters with her and then identified letters within whole words. This was done with large letter cutouts on a white table, wall or floor.



We think Abigail's progress has been accelerated through the hands-free upright mobility program at the Bridge School, which gets kids out of their wheelchairs into hands-free, self-propelled walkers that enable them to navigate their educational environment more independently. As her vision improved, she became better able to explore and navigate around her surroundings independently.

In 2016, Abigail's CVI Range score had improved to nearly a 7. She now actively participates in the classroom, visually decodes words, navigates more complex visual displays, uses a visually prompted device to communicate, and communicates nonverbally by looking towards communication partners during interactions. In addition, Abigail is building stable visual representations of important objects in her environment and physically accessing and operating those objects.



How We Operate: Important Points and Next Steps

When students use vision consistently with appropriate CVI accommodations, overall participation, communication opportunities and curricular engagement all increase. As with Abigail, students are first tested so staff can have a snapshot of the students' CVI characteristics. Results from the initial CVI Range determine interventions within classroom instruction. Our staff, however, continually re-assesses both the student and the



methods being used to ensure maximum improvement. Targeted activities and materials must match language comprehension abilities. We start by adding new visual demands to something the student already understands. Staff, families and education specialists are involved in implementing each student's strategies every step of the way.

This program is a success, and we are continually working to improve it. We are further exploring: 1) how to spread interventions and accommodations more widely in the home and community, 2) strategies to challenge students to use their vision more and more, and 3) helping students to understand their own visual needs so that they can self-advocate for their own accommodations.

To learn more about the Bridge School, please visit the following link:

<https://www.bridgeschool.org/index.php>.

Assistive Technology Experience in Serbia

by Mirjana Lazor and Nevena Ivković

One of the first services for Assistive Technology in Serbia was formed ten years ago within the boarding school "Milan Petrović," in Novi Sad. The service supports not only the students in the school, but also children with disabilities in mainstream primary and secondary schools as well as adults with disabilities.

The objectives of the Service for Assistive Technology (AT) are to:

- 1) Provide support to children and persons with disabilities using AT methods and devices.



- 2) Inform the general public about the existence of AT and the opportunities it provides in all aspects of life.
- 3) Educate the professional community and family members in the use of AT.



The AT Team is made up of experts with different educational backgrounds, including speech therapists, teachers, defectologists and assistive technology technicians who have acquired knowledge through informal education, such as seminars, training, webinars, as well as through the exchange of knowledge and experience at conferences.

The most important tasks of the AT team are: 1) assessment of AT needs, pairing the child with appropriate equipment, 2) training the child and family in the use of equipment, 3) assisting with integration of devices into living and working environments, and 4) continuous monitoring of device use.

The team is engaged in the acquisition of new AT, acquiring rentals, as well as maintenance and repair of equipment. The advisory role of team members is adjusted according to each individual's needs and is provided to students, parents and teachers as long as necessary.



The process begins with the collection of information and identification of specific user problems. When selecting the most appropriate AT methods and devices, it is necessary to take into account the unique abilities of the individual, the characteristics of the environment in which they receive education, where they live, and their sources of support and then to match these to the characteristics of an AAC/AT device.

Answers to the following questions can provide significant help: (1) What are the tasks the child/student needs to complete, (2) which tasks have so far been problematic or impossible, and (3) which ATs might help. Then the team selects the most appropriate methods and devices with the individual child and family and determines how best to approach in the use and integration of the device across environments.



After ten years of intensive development of human and material resources, the Service for



AT has a strong team of experts and uses a variety of AT methods and devices. The team has also developed procedures that enable them to support a large number of users across the age span so these individuals can pursue their educations and other activities of daily life.

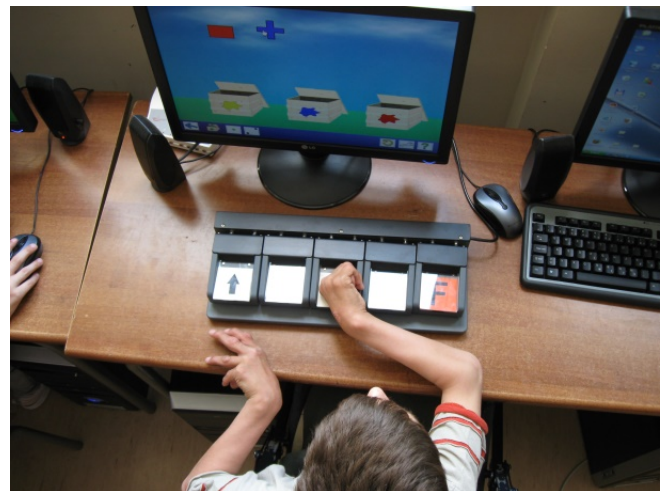
The team has also created training programs, *Using AT in Social Protection* and *AT - Application in Schools* for professionals in

the education, health and social institutions who work with children and adults with disabilities.

The AT team also seeks to inform the public about the facts such as:

- 4) In order to be usable, AT needs to match each individual's needs, circumstances and requirements, rather than be selected based on his/her diagnosis or type of disability.
- 5) There is no one device that will solve all problems or facilitate all activities.
- 6) Having a device does not guarantee its successful use.

A tailor-made or modified tool is often far more useful than the most expensive off-the-shelf device. Team AT continues to inform the general public about the existence and capabilities of assistive technology through print and electronic publications.



AT & AAC Conference in Zagreb, Croatia

September 2016

by Ružica Magušić



Croatia, an emerging AAC country, is working hard on developing this field of practice.

This autumn (1st – 2nd September 2016) a big international AT & AAC Conference was held in Zagreb, the capital city of Croatia. The Conference brought together some of the leading world AAC experts: John Costello, SLP, Director of the AAC Program at Children's Hospital Boston, Gayle Porter, SLP, inventor of the PODD communication system, Patricia Politano, PhD, SLP, ATP, Department of Disability and Human Development at University of IL Chicago.

As well as presentations by experts from abroad, Croatian practices and research were also presented. Jasmina Ivšac Pavliša, SLP, assistant professor at the Department of SLP at the Faculty of Education and Rehabilitation of the University of Zagreb, and a head of the postgraduate specialist course "Early Intervention in Educational Rehabilitation", spoke about a project, which resulted in some ICT solutions for different type of users (project ICT-AAC). The possibilities of using AAC among persons with Autism Spectrum Disorder were also discussed.

Croatian AAC practitioners, Ines Delzotto, who works as a master of educational rehabilitation in Daily Care Rehabilitation Center Veruda in Pula, and Ružica Magušić, SLP who works in Center for Education Dubrava in Zagreb, presented the results of their work, as well as the challenges that they face in every day practice.

AT and AAC users also presented their experiences:

Ana Alapić, mother of a child with spinal muscular atrophy type 1, the first child on a ventilator attending regular preschool program in Croatia, shared personal experiences of her child using eye-gaze controlled communicator in everyday communication and in preparing for school.

Maja Pleša, a high school student in the Center for Education Dubrava in Zagreb, the first Croatian AAC – Tobii EyeGaze user, and first user of eye gaze technology in Croatia, held her first public presentation in front of over 500 people at the conference.

Kathrin Lemler from Germany shared her personal experiences. She is the only faculty degree person in Germany who uses AAC.

After the conference Maja and Kathrin met in Dusseldorf, Germany.

It was nice to see how Kathrin encouraged Maja not to give up on her dream to go to college.



The Zagreb conference included presentations of products by AT expert Miroslav Vrankić, professor at the Faculty of Engineering in Rijeka who holds a chair in AT and is a founder of the company E- Glas that produces AT devices as well as presentations by vendors from TobiiDynavox, LIFETools and REHAdapt . One of the young programmers from Rijeka, Guruprasad Madhale Jadav, gave a very interesting presentation on an R&D project of thought-based communication using the Brain Computer Interface from the University of Rijeka.

At the end of the first day an interesting AAC party for delegates was hosted by the Disc Jockey (DJ) and AT user, Mario Marušić.

AAC practitioners from Poland, UK, Croatia, Slovenia, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Macedonia, Serbia, also presented their work during poster presentations.

Over 500 people attended the Conference. It was great to see how users, therapists, and AT developers bonded together to support development of AAC and AT in this part of the world.

The biggest success of this year's conference was that some of the pioneers of development of AAC and AT field of practice in Croatia (Faculty of Education and Rehabilitation of the University of Zagreb in partnership with Faculty of Electrical Engineering and Computing of the University of Zagreb, Ines Delzotto, AT practitioner from Daily Care Rehabilitation Center Veruda in Pula, Ružica Magušić, SLP, AAC practitioner from Center for Education Dubrava in Zagreb and Miroslav Vrankić, professor at the Faculty of Engineering in Rijeka), have strengthened their collaboration and are now working together to make big positive and needed changes in Croatian policies and are advocating for the rights and needs of people with complex communication needs.

This year, UNICEF Croatia also supported a big project focused on AAC. The partners on the project are: UNICEF Croatia, Faculty of Education and Rehabilitation of the University of Zagreb (Jasmina Ivšac Pavliša, Ana Marija Bohaček, Sanja Šimleša, Maja Capanec), in partnership with Faculty of Electrical Engineering and Computing of the University of Zagreb, Ružica Magušić, SLP, AAC practitioner with her colleague Katarina Škorvaga, SIT, AAC practitioner. This project will address the education of therapists about AAC across Croatia. Over 30 institutions, (rehabilitation and education centers, hospitals, associations) are included. Eventually it is planned to form and equip AT libraries in all parts of the country, so that potential AAC users and therapists can loan AAC devices for evaluation processes without cost. Key policies are also being addressed. A “working group” of AAC specialist, policies makers from social care and health ministries will be formed in order to make positive changes in social care and health laws. The issue of providing AAC devices to the users will be addressed.

In the spirit of positive changes in Croatia, we sum up with this message from Maja Pleša, a Croatian AAC user: *“Please, join together in working on developing AAC in Croatia. Although I want to go to college, I’m not sure I will ever make it. I have a lot to learn. But the children who are just starting their education need you to work together. Presume competence. Give them a chance! Thank you!”*



NOTE: The Initiator of the Conference was our wonderful friend and supporter, Prof Patricia Politano. The President of the 2016 Conference committee was prof. Miroslav Vrankić and the partners were: E – Glas, Neuron Association, Faculty of Engineering Rijeka, Faculty of Education and Rehabilitation Zagreb, TobiiDynavox, LIFETool, Center for Education Dubrava Zagreb, Clevy.

Note - 2017 AT and AAC conference in Zagreb, September 13th to 15th

Influence of the Caritas Educational Centre for Social Services on AAC Development in Russia

Agnieszka Pilch – AAC specialist, Poland www.szkola.spdn.pl
 Bożena Kondrusik – FMM Nun, Teacher, Russia <http://caritas-edu.ru/en/>

In 2012, Russia signed the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. This paved the way for changes in the educational law, which in turn may enable children with communication problems to start developing their communication skills. Sadly, in Russia very few teachers are prepared to work with this group of children.

The Caritas Educational Centre for Social Service established in 2004 is a non-profit, educational organization that belongs to the Roman Catholic Church. The Centre provides a wide range of training activities for professionals and non-professionals working with people with disabilities. Since 2012, Caritas has focused on raising the quality of life for people with severe and complex disabilities, especially people who are nonverbal by introducing AAC knowledge in Russia. The staff is cooperating with numerous AAC specialists from around the world, including professor Steven von Tetzchner, Nadia Browning and several AAC professionals from Poland. (See article in ACWN, December 2014.)

The Caritas Educational Centre organizes courses and conferences focused on AAC. It works together with special and integrating education facilities as well as colleges in St. Petersburg. It also publishes books and articles.

One of the Centre's latest projects was to provide internships for Russian therapists, mostly from St. Petersburg, in three schools in Poland that utilize AAC methods for students with severe communication problems: (1) Special School Unit #109 in Warsaw, (2) Special School Unit #11 in Cracow and (3) Nonpublic School Unit administered by an NGO called the *Step by Step Association* in Zamość.



The three Polish schools hosted Russian interns for week-long periods. Bozena Kondrusik, the PR manager at the St Petersburg Centre, served as both the coordinator and Russian/Polish translator. Along with her, 13 people visited the Zamość school to learn about the organization of the school, as well as the school's current AAC policies.

As part of the AAC course in the school, lectures were given by principal Małgorzata Jagoda and deputy principal Agnieszka Pilch, who is in charge of the AAC team. The Russian interns also had an opportunity to observe classes, meet people who use AAC, exchange experiences, and have meaningful discussions. They commented that during their stay in Poland they were able to observe the everyday routines of AAC users and the cooperation among a specialist team. They appreciated being given a chance to contact their Polish colleagues, ask questions, have conversations and seek new solutions.

These encounters enabled the group to compare their own knowledge and experience with their Polish colleagues.

The AAC courses widened and deepened their knowledge and skills, and helped them learn methods of introducing AAC, evaluating communication competence and the needs of children, and observing the practical everyday usage of low technology.

They said....

You've taught us patience, the skill of waiting and a more subtle, individual approach and perceiving the children's emotional state; you proposed a new philosophy of communication.

Another part of supporting Russia's AAC development is short courses organized there, as well as school supervisions. This year in St. Petersburg, projects providing training in nonverbal communication were held by Aldona Mysakowska-Adamczyk, Iwona Stępniewicz, Jolanta Jaszczuk and Agnieszka Pilch from Poland, Kristine Stadskliv, Steven von Tetzchner from Norway and Kasia Launonen from Finland.

The Caritas Centre also co-participated in preparing an AAC training project at the University of Perm, in Russia. Agnieszka Pilch and Bożena Kondrusik met with teachers and speech therapists from the city of Perm.

These visits are an interesting and important experience for foreign specialists, because they can learn about the realities and necessities by working directly with the AAC users and training professionals.

Many people and associations from St. Petersburg are very involved in exchanging AAC experiences throughout Russia. The Caritas Centre has become a key place for their work and meetings. A webpage about AAC in Russia was created: <http://pro-aac.ru>. This year's AAC month (October) was filled with events.

AAC specialists in St. Petersburg have ambitious plans. They would like to:

- 1) Initiate an AAC association for specialists, parents and users that would unite forces with various organizations and persons to develop AAC in Russia,
- 2) Create a support system for parents - "AAC school - not only for professionals",
- 3) Give access to AAC courses for people outside St Petersburg, by organizing trainings in various towns and regions,
- 4) Widen the circle of AAC awareness to include social and medical institutions (among them Christian communities - priests).
- 5) Translate medical aids for nonverbal persons - pain charts, *etc.*
- 6) Initiate and sustain social projects concerning AAC so that society is better prepared to communicate - the "Everyone can be heard" festival,
- 7) Organize a longer (10 days) internship in Poland for the most active teachers who introduce AAC,
- 8) Host an international AAC conference,
- 9) Publish AAC literature.

2017 ECEAAC Conference

In 1997, the first Eastern and Central European Regional Augmentative and Alternative Communication Conference took place in Hungary. Since then different countries within the region have hosted the biennial conference, enabling more people to learn about AAC, with national and international specialists exchanging their experiences.

The 11th Eastern and Central European Regional AAC Conference will take place on July 4th - 6th 2017. The host country is Romania and the venue is University of Bucharest, Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences. The conference theme is “Spread the Word! Make a Change for Communicating Better!”

Romania is honoured to organize the 11th ECE AAC conference, celebrating the 20 year anniversary of the conference. The 3-day programme will include keynote speakers, parallel presentations, workshops, poster sessions and an exhibition of AT/AAC devices and software. The conference website is now open for submission of abstracts and registration: <http://www.comunicare-augmentativa.ro/ECE-AAC-Conference.html>. For bank payment details – email AAC_Conference@comunicare-augmentativa.ro



Additional Options for Attendees

- a city tour of Bucharest with a traditional dinner and
- a day trip from Bucharest to the spectacular Prahova valley, including Bran Castle, otherwise known internationally as “Dracula’s Castle”.

OF NOTE:

Transportation ASSistance in Zambia

The Zambian government provided the Mukuni basic school with a special education needs teacher. However, as in other areas of Africa, few, if any, resources are available. No materials. No equipment. No transportation for children who are physically disabled in outreach villages. You can't *go* to school if you can't *get* to school. Lacking transportation, many children are unable to attend.

The Butterfly Tree, a U.K organization that focuses on Zambia, is now working to raise funds to purchase donkeys to transport the disabled children who are unable to walk to school.



Idrin Gani is disabled and now rides a donkey to school

If you would like to donate a donkey the cost is £70 (about US \$88). You can do so at

<http://www.thebutterflytree.org.uk/pages/get-involved/>.

To learn more about what they are doing or to donate to other causes, go to

<http://www.thebutterflytree.org.uk/pages/2009/special-needs-for-mukuni>.

To get more information about their education programs, go to:

<http://www.thebutterflytree.org.uk/pages/our-work/education/>

Ensuring Rights for Persons with Disabilities

Imagine “a world where everyone has access to the high-quality, affordable assistive products they need to lead a healthy, productive and dignified life.”

This is the mission of the Global Cooperative on Assistive Technology (GATE) initiative, established by the World Health Organization (WHO) to ensure achievement of the guidelines laid out in the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The initiative contains four focus areas: 1) Policy framework, 2) Products, 3) Personnel training, and 4) Provision for delivery. Through advancement of these areas, the initiative is working towards improving access to high-quality assistive products globally.

To learn more about the initiative and its activities, go to:

http://www.who.int/phi/implementation/assistive_technology/phi_gate/en/

Does AAC Affect the Development of Natural Speech?

Communicating with pictures, symbols and gestures is an alternative method for those who find speech difficult, AND it does NOT interfere with a child's ability to develop natural speech. A study group at KEYCOMM in Edinburgh looked into this question and a summary of their findings is below. Visit the following site to learn more about KEYCOMM: <http://keycomm.weebly.com/>.

Key Points

AAC will NOT keep someone from developing or using natural speech
AAC can have a positive effect on speech production
AAC is part of a child's total communication system
AAC enhances a child's ability to communicate what they want, when they want to whoever they want
Model the use of AAC as you talk (remember a child is usually exposed to speech for around a year before they utter a single word) so model, model, model!

“Communication is the most fundamental of human capacities. People need to be able to communicate to fulfill their social, educational, emotional and vocational potential.

Everybody has the potential to communicate.”

(International Communication Project 2016)

Communication Motivation: Success Stories from the ACE Centre

It's not just the work that we do here at the ACE Centre that's amazing, it's the people that we work with. Time after time we're humbled and inspired by their sheer tenacity and desire to communicate. Behind every successful tale is the hard work and determination of parents, teachers, therapists and other support professionals who motivate, support and educate. Learning to communicate can be a long, tedious and frustrating process, but these case studies show what can be achieved with ambition and the right support. Follow this link to view the wonderful stories: <http://acecentre.org.uk/case-studies>, and this link for additional resources: <http://acecentre.org.uk/resources>. Please share these stories far and wide so that we can spread the word to as many people as possible.

RESOURCES

World Cerebral Palsy Day

October 5, 2016 was World Cerebral Palsy Day!

The day was dedicated to creating a global movement for children and adults with cerebral palsy. To learn more about the awareness campaign, follow this link:

<https://worldcpday.org/our-campaign/>. For an extensive set of resources including the guide pictured to the right, follow this link: <https://worldcpday.org/tools/>.



Top Tips for Communication



Adults play a very important role in helping children learn to talk and communicate. Because of this, The Communication Trust has produced a leaflet with 10 important communication tips to remember when working with children, young people and families. The tips also include a brief description of why each is important and impactful. The leaflet unfolds to a brightly-colored poster that is great for hanging in classrooms or

other learning settings. They are sold in a set of 25 for a small price at the following website: <http://icancharity.org.uk/resources/top-tips-leaflet-communication-trust-pack-25>.

Misunderstood (Supporting Children and Young People with SLCN)

To learn more about speech, language and communication needs (SLCN), have a look at the booklet produced by the Communication Trust. It explains speech, language, and communication and gives examples of how difficulties with communication can affect children and youth. The guide has tips on how to support and identify children with speech, language, and communication difficulties. It also has a comprehensive list of additional resources.

To download the booklet go to

http://www.thecommunicationtrust.org.uk/media/3670/misunderstood_edition_2_final.pdf

Communication for Participation

It takes extra effort and care by parents, teachers and speech-language pathologists to make it possible for children and young people to participate in their education. Awareness that helps children make decisions is especially important for children with special education needs and speech language and communication needs, because it can be difficult for those children to communicate their needs and desires.

The Communication Trust has created a comprehensive and interactive resource with multiple worksheets and charts to help readers assess their own practices, what they are doing well and what they could improve. Each fill-in-the-blank chart is accompanied by examples, a description of why this aspect of participation is important, and tools for achieving that goal.

As readers advance through the guide, there are activities for children that use pictures from communication booklets and like/dislike charts. Many activities use art role-play, video recording and visual schedules to help children express themselves.

The guide and accompanying worksheets focus on three main topics:

1. How to gain insight into the views, wishes and feelings of children and youth.
2. How to enable children and youth to participate more fully in the decision-making process, including how to check participation levels and gain feedback during the process.
3. How to help children and youth achieve meaningful educational and other life-domain outcomes.

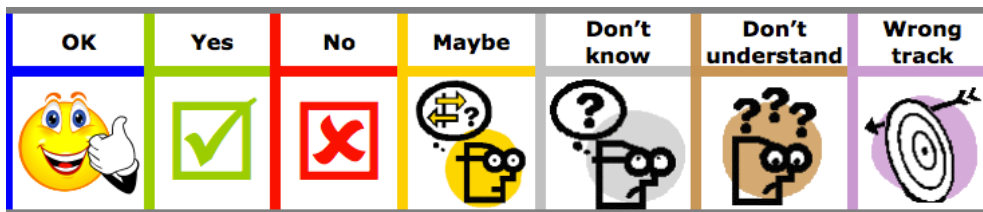


To access the complete guide/charts go to

https://www.thecommunicationtrust.org.uk/media/449470/involving_cyp_with_slcn_toolkit.pdf

Amy Speech Language Therapy

A simple, useful introductory booklet for children unable to speak or to speak clearly is available. The booklet has various topics to support conversations (by pointing to various words and pictures) with someone the child just met. For example: Explaining the reason for using AAC, giving brief instructions so the other person knows how to communicate with the child who uses AAC; providing vocabulary for common objects; emotions; time and place descriptors, listing family member and friends' names and relationships; emergency contact numbers; and other personal information.



At the bottom of each page is a series of words and pictures to enable the child to indicate yes/no, don't

know, don't understand, or let the communication partner know that they are on the "wrong track". You can also find many free downloadable communication boards at <http://www.amyspeechlanguagetherapy.com/communication-boards.html>

Getting Hands-On with PODD

While wrapping your head around the words Pragmatically Organised Dynamic Display (PODD) can be a bit daunting, the concept is actually quite simple. "Pragmatic" just means using language socially, and "dynamic" means changing. So in simple terms, a PODD is a communication booklet for social situations that contains many pages organized into specific themes. To spread awareness and practices with this tool, Yvonne Theodorsen has been creating weekly sheets with helpful tips on how to use and create PODDs. There are currently 14 different sheets.

To get a complete introduction to PODD from Novita, go to <http://www.novita.org.au/Content.aspx?p=683>

To view the "getting hands on" sheets from Interactive Speech Pathology, go to <http://www.janefarrall.com/getting-hands-on-with-podd/>



Reach Out and Touch Pictures



Exposure to pictures can be a necessary first step to literacy for children who are drawn to books through their colorful pictures and because they represent the surrounding world. Books may serve as a link to words in print and foster the development of literacy skills. However, children who are blind or visually impaired may need other ways/supports to learn about their environment, develop concepts and ultimately develop literacy skills.

Paths to Literacy is an organization that can help children who are blind/visually impaired to develop a path to literacy. For more information, go to <http://www.pathstoliteracy.org/blog/reach-out-and-touch-picture-concrete-abstract-thinking>.

Special Education Apps

(Note: The following resource requires costly technology and may not be suitable for all areas of the world.)

A group of qualified speech-language pathologists have collaborated to create an open online wiki platform with many different Apps that support specific learning needs. The page can be navigated by the left sidebar, which has links to resources and information. The Apps are organized by subject including: Communication and Language, Reading, Writing, Math, Science/Social Studies, Art/Creativity, Music, Games/Social, Motor, CVI, Accessibility and Hardware/Accessories. Each page then has an extensive chart of important information, including links to Apps, a brief description of their use, pictures of each App included, opinions on their value. To access the complete resource, go to <http://spedapps2.wikispaces.com/>.

Using the iPad to Support Learners with Physical Difficulties

(Note: The following resource requires costly technology and may not be suitable for all areas of the world.)



Touchscreens can be difficult to navigate, especially for people with physical difficulties, because they require the use of two or three fingers and/or precise tapping. Helpful hints to many built-in features of the iPad can make it easier to use, depending on specific needs of its user. This guide, created by Call Scotland, gives step-by-step directions to changing iPad settings so that the screen responds to different gestures.

For example, you can change the motions for zoom from two fingers moving apart to another motion that is easier for the user. The guide also walks readers through a number of tools that come with the iPad, as well as how to connect accessories using Bluetooth. Download the guide from: <http://www.callscotland.org.uk/downloads/posters-and-leaflets/using-the-ipad-to-support-learners-with-physical-difficulties/>.

VIDEOS

Aided Language Simulation: Helping Children Communicate

The ACE Centre has developed some short films that demonstrate how assistive technology can help individuals achieve their potential. They have already helped many people of all ages to use technology so they can access education, work and leisure activities. These films celebrate accomplishments.

To view the video that the ACE Centre presented to parents at their 2016 national weekend, go to <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=flFNMky22-U&feature=youtu.be>. For more information and additional video clips, you can follow their Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/ACECentre.uk/>.

Communication Matter's Got Talent!

1Voice Trustee and role model Helen Quiller is involved in an inclusive music group, where she enjoys song writing and making music. This song, which reflects on her experience as an AAC user, was voted the winner of the CM's Got Talent competition at the Communication Matters (ISAAC UK) conference in September. Congratulations Helen!

To watch the music video, go to: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0BVRJwNCZYM>
To learn more about 1Voice, go to <http://www.1voice.info/>

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

AKF Malawi Fundraising Campaign



The Able Kids Foundation (AKF), a school for children with disabilities in Blantyre, Malawi, has recently launched a donation page on Devxchange, with the goal of raising money so that AKF can provide breakfast, lunch and an afternoon snack for the children who attend.

Devxchange is a Canadian organization that helps to link donors to charities and charges minimal amounts to send the money overseas. The website tracks progress towards the fundraising goal and allows donors to pay online with their credit card or even set up monthly donations. The organization also takes cheques by mail. A charitable tax receipt is provided for every donation.

If you wish to donate using a personal cheque, please send to: **Devxchange, PO Box 224, Barrie, ON L4M 4T2** . Make the cheque payable to Devxchange with a

*note in the memo line – “**Able Kids**”* so they know which charity the money should go to.

Online donations can be made at the Able Kids page on the Devxchange website at this link: <https://devxchange.org/campaigns/able-kids-malawi/>. For much more information about AKF, go to previous editions of this newsletter.

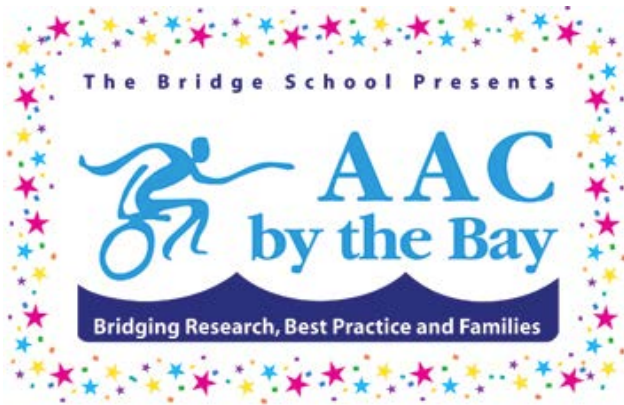
Other Newsletters of Note

The following newsletters support people with disabilities and complex communication needs. CCCF works closely with these organizations. We have often featured them in our newsletter to highlight wonderful things they have done and bring to light programmes they sponsor.

The *University of Pretoria* newsletter: Go to <http://www.universityofpretoria.co.za/media/shared/212/20161103-oct2016-newsletter.zp102624.pdf>,

The *CALL Scotland* newsletter: Go to <http://www.callscotland.org.uk/downloads/newsletters/November-2016/>.

AAC BY THE BAY 2017 CONFERENCE



The Bridge School will be hosting its AAC by the Bay conference March 23-25, 2017 at the headquarters of CISCO in San Jose, California. Through the advanced technology provided by CISCO, groups from around the world can sign on and actively participate in the conference *as it happens*. The Bridge School and its sponsors will be providing a *live* web cast of the entire conference.

Those who would like to connect virtually should form groups of at least five to register. There is a \$25 administrative fee per participant. Go to <http://www.bridgeschool.org/outreach/aacbtb/webcast.php> for more information

FAREWELL THOUGHTS

A big Thank You! to everyone who contributed to this edition of our newsletter. Although individual nations may have their own native language, we are brought together globally through AAC - a language common to all of us around the world.

As this busy year ends we look forward to 2017 with positive thoughts on many opportunities to continue sharing information and news worldwide, through social media, informal meetings and national and international conferences.

Dot

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