

Message from the ISAAC President

Tracy Shepherd

Feel the “**Vibes of AAC**” – what does that mean? It’s the feeling we have when we are with our people: people who use AAC and people who support AAC in practice, research, and life. ISAAC members are all so passionate about AAC. It feels incredible to be together with like-minded people and our community of AAC supporters to feel the “vibes,” the energy and electricity we create together. We gather to celebrate this amazing and ever-growing field to keep up with the advances in technology and to learn how to best support folks who rely on AAC either full- or part-time.

AAC is something ISAAC members all feel deeply about and together we can feel these “vibes.” I share this sentiment developed by the LEAD committee because it is the theme of AAC Awareness Month in October 2024. Also in October, we are celebrating these “vibes” with our next virtual event focusing on the theme, “Vibes of AAC.”

We have learned from ISAAC Connect in 2021 and received much feedback about the benefits of connecting virtually.



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This venue will give folks who are not able to travel to conferences for various reasons a better opportunity to participate in the sessions and hearty conversations.

The list of confirmed presenters is available on the [registration website](#), and we will be highlighting their topics and presentations in the coming months. Registration is open, and we are so looking forward to seeing you all there. It will be the preeminent AAC conference for 2024 and is not to be missed!

Connecting Around the World

ISAAC is dedicated to reaching out globally to support AAC and to bring new regions into the ISAAC family. Some of the regions that the ISAAC EB is connecting with include South Korea, Bulgaria, Kenya, and Ethiopia. We are connecting with AAC leaders in these areas to help expand the reach of ISAAC and to discuss and support emerging chapters. At the recent East Asian Regional Conference on AAC in Seoul, ISAAC members met to further discuss partnerships. Other connections continue strongly at the ATIA conference in Florida where there was the opportunity to hear about the many fantastic initiatives happening in the USA at the USSAAC meeting.

Membership

There is still time to [renew your membership](#) and benefit from [reduced registration costs](#) for the “Vibes of AAC” event. The cost of attending this virtual event is also more accessible given there is no travel or hotel stays to consider. Please share information about this upcoming event with your networks.

Volunteerism

I continue to be amazed by the work that the ISAAC community can accomplish as a primarily volunteer-driven organization. I want to thank all of you for your continued support; we are all so busy with our daily lives, yet we find time to share and contribute to this organization. Thank you for what you do individually to keep ISAAC moving toward our vision that AAC will be recognized, valued, and used throughout the world.

Please know that your support and contributions do not go unnoticed. Each hour you dedicate, every smile you share, every ounce of effort you invest, and your dedicated membership makes such a difference.

Thank you all!

[Tracy Shepherd](#)
ISAAC President

From the Executive Director



Franklin Smith

Welcome to the March 2024 edition of The ISAAC Communicator.

Another spring has “sprung” here in the northern hemisphere, and what tremendously warm weather (at least for Toronto, Canada) we have been experiencing for the past few weeks. This time of year has always been my favourite, because it is so full of hope for the coming few months.

Looking at a bit longer of a time horizon, we here at ISAAC International also hope that our members and anyone who is associated with the field of AAC (persons who use AAC, their families and friends, practitioners, researchers, and others), are able to lead their lives in freedom and peace. We are especially thinking of our stakeholders who are living in regions of the world experiencing conflict, including Europe, the Middle East, and Africa. May you all be safe!

For those who have not heard, ISAAC International will be presenting a fully virtual

online event later this year, during October – which is AAC Awareness Month, with presentations and invited speakers. More information is presented below, and you can [register to attend on our website](#).

ISAAC Membership 2024

Membership renewal notification emails have already been sent to all ISAAC-Australia, ISAAC-Canada, ISAAC-Español, ISAAC-US (USSAAC), and ISAAC International members.

As in previous years, these members can make use of our [online membership portal](#) to renew an existing membership, or take out a new membership. The ISAAC office has already sent out multiple membership reminders during the October 2023 through March 2024 timeframe. We will do one final round of reminders prior to the end of March.

Specific membership renewal information is available on the ISAAC website for each of the above as follows:

- ISAAC-Australia.....[2024 Membership Portal](#)
- ISAAC-Canada.....[2024 Membership Portal](#)
- ISAAC-Español.....[Portal de membresía 2024](#)
- ISAAC-US (USSAAC).....[2024 Membership Portal](#)
- ISAAC International (English).....[2024 Membership Portal](#)

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ISAAC 2024 Virtual Event

As mentioned earlier, ISAAC will be presenting a fully virtual online event, coinciding later this year with AAC Awareness Month, in October.

On behalf of ISAAC International, I would like to thank all of our volunteers on the organizing committee, for their energy, effort, and contributions!

With content sessions scheduled to take place on October 29 and 30, this is promising to be an exciting event. [Our registration portal is now open!](#)

In order to register, you will need to create an account on our conference registration site. For current ISAAC members, please keep in mind that **this account will be different from your ISAAC membership account**. If you already have signed up for an event registration account, you can log into that account directly, or if you have forgotten your password, you will be able to reset it.

Registration payments can be made online directly, using a VISA or MasterCard credit card (no debit cards). Registration pricing is denominated in USD or US dollars.

We also have a long list of confirmed speakers listed on our registration site already. This is going to be a “not to be missed” event.

For additional information, emails can be sent to virtual2024@isaac-online.org.

ISAAC International 2024 Council Meeting

Every even-numbered year is an important time here at ISAAC International, as it represents the time when volunteer terms on our ISAAC Executive Board end, and new leadership comes on board.

As per the ISAAC Governance Handbook, materials have already been distributed to the ISAAC Council, and they are in the process of reviewing this material and determining whether additional nominations are going to be brought forward.

In addition, an online 2024 Special Meeting of the ISAAC Council [has been officially announced](#).

If you are interested in taking part in this important aspect of ISAAC International governance, feel free to communicate either directly with me, or with any member of the ISAAC leadership (Executive Board and Council).

As always, I welcome your thoughts and feedback. Please do not hesitate to contact me directly, at franklin@isaac-online.org, should you require any further information or assistance.

Regards and thanks,
Franklin Smith

AAC Around the World



Editors Note:

"AAC Around the World" is a new, permanent section of the ISAAC Communicator, which now replaces the CSWN newsletter. ISAAC welcomes articles contributed for this section from around the world, that focus on AAC and assistive technology.

Collective Adventures

By Tiké De Marco

Field Trips for The Bridge School are planned to combine multiple themes and opportunities for both students and their families. This includes fun and learning of course, but themes also revolve around communication, access, community outreach, and family involvement.

Months in advance, the classroom teams determine adventures that align with current curriculum. Leading up to the event, students explore, research, and read about where they will be going (i.e., the library, grocery store). Multi-sensory opportunities are created and modified for the different age groups. For instance, kindergarten students might play grocery store in their walkers and move through centers with different "grocery store" activities. Students in grades 1-5 might act out being librarians and patrons looking for books of interest. Computer

work could include writing about a favorite book or making a list of topics to explore while at the library, or even making a list of favorite snacks to add to the family grocery list.

As the outing gets closer, students make a list of the tools they need for the trip (e.g., Step-by-Step, low-tech communication board, tray). Some students may set personal goals they want to achieve (e.g., say hello to someone in the community, ask the librarian for "help"). Students practice using tools and strategies designed for the activity (e.g., reading social stories, reviewing and practicing checklists, pairing special and learned objects with a visual display on their communication device). These tools and strategies are developed to help students acclimate and adjust to people and environments that are out of their routine and typical school environment.



Families are invited to participate in the outings and are encouraged to help their child use their communication tools and strategies in these potentially unfamiliar environments with

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unfamiliar people. With the help of the student's teacher, a parent has the support to learn about communication pages developed and customized specifically for the field trip. What do the parents say about this? "We never went to the library before. Now I know she loves it, and we can use this page." Family involvement like this is an important element for TBS as we typically find individuals, unless extremely independent and able to advocate for themselves, or with a highly skilled paid partner, do not use their communication tools when in the community. The goal for our families is to change this and encourage consistent use in all environments.



Communication Access is another theme that makes our community outings even more exceptional. Bringing awareness to others about individuals who use AAC is a cornerstone goal for TBS. Prior to our events, a training is

coordinated with the community members (e.g., head librarian, store owner) with whom our students will interact. This is to help prepare these individuals, so they know what to expect and how to engage with our students. Our team shares information about our students and their communication tools and basic strategies that can help support everyone in the moment.

On the day of, we encourage our students to share with the public about their rights as an individual who uses AAC. With programmed and practiced messages, our students visit establishments, talk with community members there, and share about the importance of communication access and what that means. With fliers received, the public engages enthusiastically, and our students have moments they can reflect upon and share as a memory. All field trips are worthy of reflection, and we ask our students to think about how the moments, people, and places made them feel (e.g., "I love reading books"; "I liked shopping"; "I feel happy"). Relating feelings to experiences and talking about different emotions is highly recommended!

These collective and collaborative opportunities bring a wealth of information to the public, help expand

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student experiences, and further motivate families to explore things that may be outside of their typical family experiences. Our exceptional staff with their creative minds, never-ending encouragement and support to the students and their unrelenting energy and focus create adventures worthy of sharing.



*We want to recognize ISAAC, NAACA and CDAC for making the Communication Access Flyer available [here](#).

ISAAC Conference Cancún Donations Booth

By Miroslav Vrankic

At the recent ISAAC Conference Cancún, a Donations Booth was set up, embodying the spirit of sharing and community within the realm of Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC). This initiative was not

just about providing a platform for the exchange of AAC resources; it was an effort to foster a deeper connection within the community by sharing the journey of these resources.

The concept behind the donations booth was simple yet impactful. It served as a hub where attendees could either donate or acquire AAC devices, materials, and literature that they no longer needed or could benefit from. This initiative opened up opportunities for those in need of AAC resources to access them without the burden of high costs, and for others to declutter responsibly, knowing their contributions would make a significant difference in someone's life.



Donations Booth

However, this year's conference took the donations booth a step further by adding a unique twist. The organizers wanted to capture the stories behind the AAC resources

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being exchanged. They were interested in the path these items took from the donor to the recipient, which sometimes spanned across countries. To achieve this, a QR code was strategically placed at the donations booth. This QR code led to an online form, available in both English and Spanish, allowing participants to document the "transaction" taking place. This thoughtful addition enabled the tracking of each resource's journey, turning simple donations into stories of connection and impact.



The introduction of the online form to track the transactions was a game-changer. It allowed for a tangible connection between donors and recipients, fostering a sense of community and shared purpose. By documenting the journey

of each item, participants were not just part of a transaction; they were part of a story, a narrative that highlighted the power of giving and the far-reaching impact of generosity.

Now, with the data collected through these online forms, we have assembled a map showing the journey of some of the items across the world.

CONFERENCE CANCÚN DONATIONS BOOTH MAP



Items such as AAC textbooks and devices, such as Lightwriter, Leaf Switch, TimeCue, Say-It! SAM, and SmartNav travelled from Canada and the United States to Conference Cancún. These devices then made their way from Cancún to new homes in Baja California Sur, Brazil, Israel, and more!

The map shows the logistical journey of the AAC resources from one person to another, but there is also a significant emotional and

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transformative journey that accompanies each donation. They serve as a testament to the kindness, solidarity, and shared mission of the AAC community, illustrating how a simple act of giving can bridge distances, connect hearts, and empower individuals.

The donations booth at the ISAAC Conference Cancún has set a precedent for future events, proving that when a community comes together to share resources and stories, the impact can be profound. It is a reminder of the power of collective action and the significant role that compassion and empathy play in advancing the field of AAC.

Through this initiative, the conference has not only facilitated the exchange of valuable resources but has also woven a tapestry of connections that will continue to inspire and support individuals in the AAC community for years to come.

Experiences at the Third East Asian AAC Conference in Korea

By Sarah Yong

From the 8th to the 10th Jan, I had the privilege of attending the Third East Asian AAC

Conference that was held on in Seoul, Korea. The conference was very well organised by a committee comprising of AAC advocates and experts from Korea. The committee showed great competence in managing and coordinating many of the aspects of the conference such as registration, accommodation, and both the oral and poster presentations. They also exhibited great hospitality. We all felt very warmly welcomed.



ISAAC-Singapore delegation with Stephen von Tetzchner and Ms. Aldona Mysakowska Amdamzyk

Each day invited experts and AAC advocates from different parts of the world presented on varied aspects of AAC. The topics included –

- Augmentative and Alternative Communication through the life span- Stephen von Tetzchner (University of Oslo, Norway)
- AAC in Singapore - Sarah Yong (Specialised Assistive Technology Centre, Singapore)

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- Living Lab-Based AAC Interventions for Adults with Developmental Disabilities - Sangeun Shin (Chungnam National University, Republic of Korea)
- Facilitating Communication for AAC Users: Directions to Support Community Integration - Soojung Chae (Jeonju University, Republic of Korea)
- Linking Clinic with Classroom in Intensive Focused Preservice Education on AAC - Sojung Kim (West Chester University, USA)
- A recipe for success: using AAC and other ingredients to support students with distressed behavior - Pat Miranda (University of British Columbia, Canada)
- Effects of USSAAC Emergency Toolkit for AAC Users - Yoosun Chung (George Mason University, USA) and Wendy Quach (San Jose State University, USA)

The talks challenged me to think more deeply about my own understanding of AAC and its application. I was truly inspired by the depth and breadth of the wonderful field of AAC that we work in!

During the conference, I had the privilege of sharing my own AAC journey as well as the AAC work that we are embarking on in Singapore.



We were able to present our journey of how we started the ISAAC Singapore Chapter. Through narrations of stories, video clips, PowerPoint slides and photos, we showcased how we embarked on our goal of building a strong AAC community in Singapore where ‘everybody’ – professionals, people who use AAC, caregivers, researchers and other stakeholders – are all included. I was also grateful for the two members of the Singapore team, Ms. Michelle Cheong and Mr. Yong Seng Koon who co-presented on the ISAAC Chapter.



Delivering the lecture at Seoul National University

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The conference was attended by 160 participants from 12 different countries including Norway, Singapore, Australia, Canada, USA, China, Japan, Poland, Thailand, Mongolia, Hong Kong, and of course the Republic of Korea. During the two and a half days, participants presented, both orally and through posters, covering AAC in research, clinical practice, and application in various spheres of the community. Following the conference, Professor Stephen von Tetzchner, Dr Sojung Kim and myself also presented three invited talks.



Sarah Yong and
Dr. Yoosun Chung



Conference Participants

The two days were wonderful opportunities to reunite with old friends and meet new ones. It was indeed encouraging to see how so many of us – researchers, caregivers, clinical practitioners, persons who use AAC – were all united in the passion to enable communication through the use of AAC. Lastly, I would like to say a big

"Kamsahamnida" to the organising committee and congratulations on a very successful conference.

Bridging Expertise and Cultures: Personal Reflections from the East Asian Regional AAC Conference in Seoul, Korea

By Yoosun Chung

Hello everyone,

I am Yoosun Chung, the former Past-President of USSAAC. I am delighted to share my experiences from a recent presentation at the East Asian Regional AAC Conference, where I had the opportunity to co-present with Wendy Quach, who is also a former Past-President of USSAAC.

Being invited to this conference in early January in Seoul, Korea, was particularly meaningful to me, as it is my hometown. This opportunity was made even more special by Wendy's evident excitement about visiting Korea, a place she'd always dreamed of exploring.

Wendy and I co-presented on a critical topic: disaster preparedness for people who use AAC and their families. Our presentation, titled, "Disaster Preparedness and AAC - Are you prepared?" highlighted the Emergency Toolkit

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developed by USSAAC's Disaster Relief Committee. This committee is committed to enhancing disaster readiness for AAC users, ensuring the replacement of lost AACs during emergencies/disasters, and advocating for constant communication access. They've created an invaluable resource with this Toolkit. Its text-based, cost-free structure guides users and their families through a comprehensive 7-day plan to prepare for emergencies/disasters.



Wendy Quach and Yoosun Chung presenting on "Disaster Preparedness and AAC - Are you prepared?"

It adopts a microlearning approach, allowing users to digest the material at their own pace and recommends partnering with someone for support in times of crisis. The Toolkit is easily delivered to mobile devices via SMS, WhatsApp, or email. The ultimate goal is to equip AAC users and their families with the necessary knowledge and specific steps to maintain communication access in

emergencies/disasters. As former USSAAC presidents, Wendy and I were thrilled with the positive reception of our presentation.

The conference was not only a showcase of informative presentations but also a vibrant network of global connections. We engaged with remarkable individuals from the US, Singapore, Norway, Thailand, Japan, and Australia, among others.

And the food! I had the pleasure of introducing my favorite Korean dishes and snacks, all provided by the conference, to Wendy and new friends. The conference banquet was particularly memorable, featuring an incredible ensemble of musicians with disabilities performing traditional Korean pieces. The atmosphere was truly uplifting.

I personally found the conference well-organized. Although some inaccessible areas inconvenienced people with physical challenges, I sincerely appreciated the effort and time the conference organizers invested in creating this memorable event.

Reflecting on it all, it is clear that it's not just about gaining knowledge in the AAC field. It's about the people you meet, the connections you make, and those unforgettable moments like the banquet performance. I'm already looking forward to the next conference in China in 2026.

Chapter News



Communication Matters



Communication Matters International AAC Conference 2024

The Communication Matters annual [International AAC Conference](#) will take place at the University of Leeds from 8-10th September 2024.

Over the course of two and a half days, participants will enjoy a diverse programme of presentations, posters and an extensive exhibition from AAC supplier companies.



Call for Papers

You are invited to contribute to the conference. Presentations should be relevant to the field

of Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) and where possible promote the positive role of AAC in the **empowerment** of the people who use it. This year, we particularly welcome presentations regarding neurodiversity and adults using AAC.

We are open to presentations from all in the AAC community including professionals and supporters and we especially encourage contributions from AAC users and family members.

We have based our topic areas for the presentations on the three aspects of evidence-based practice which represent improved outcomes for all.

These aspects are:

- **Best Research Evidence:** Papers submitted under this heading are carried out by independent organisations such as education, social or health services and universities. Authors should pay particular attention to describing the methodology and results of the study.
- **Clinical and Professional Service Delivery:** Papers submitted under this heading may include service development, audit or implementation projects, as well as practice reports.

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- Typically, these papers will be presented by those providing a service for AAC users.
- **Personal Stories and Case Studies:** Papers submitted under this heading would include personal experience stories, single case studies and examples of AAC in the wider community.

Papers can be submitted as either a **Platform** presentation (45-minutes), **Workshop** presentation (45-minutes), a **Poster**, or a **Lightning Talk** (6.25 minutes or 12.5 minutes for AAC users).

We are using an online submission programme called Aventri. You will be asked to create an account, login and submit a simple form with a title and an abstract (a short summary) about your talk (maximum 300 words).

The deadline for submissions is **19 April 2024**. However, please submit your abstract as soon as possible to help with our planning.

Further information can be found on our website: <https://bit.ly/cm2024callforpapers>.

If you have any questions or would like to discuss the opportunity, please email admin@communicationmatters.org.uk.

#CM2024conf

Glasgow AAC Information Day 2024



This AAC Information Day is a product demonstration day supported and presented by our Commercial Members from the UK's leading suppliers of communication aids, equipment, software and symbol systems.

The day consists of five sessions which provide information and offer up-to-date knowledge on the range of AAC products available in the UK. There will also be an exhibition period where you can try out products.

Date: Wednesday 1 May 2024

Venue: Golden Jubilee Conference Hotel, Beardmore Street, Clydebank, Glasgow, G81 4SA

Costs: FREE to attend! Lunch & refreshments are provided

To find out which suppliers are attending, please visit our website by clicking on the links below:

- [Read more about AAC Information Days](#)

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- [Request a place on this AAC Information Day](#)

Registration now open!

#CMAACinfoday

Good News from National Lottery England!

We are delighted to announce that Communication Matters has been successful in being awarded a grant from the National Lottery to continue our [AAC peer support and mentoring project](#) in England for another five years.

This is fantastic news as we aim to continue to offer a range of opportunities for accredited and non-accredited learning in a wide range of topics including mentoring and peer support and communication clubs.

We are currently planning next steps so keep a look out for updates coming shortly. For more information, contact the CM Office on admin@communicationmatters.org.uk.

Receive Updates from Communication Matters!

WELCOME TO COMMUNICATION MATTERS

We aim to increase awareness, understanding and knowledge of the needs of people who struggle to communicate.



Follow us on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

Join our [AAC Forum](#) google group.

If you would like to be added to our mailing list, please email

admin@communicationmatters.org.uk.

ISAAC Español Chapter Takes Center Stage: A New Chapter Uniting Spanish-Speaking AAC Enthusiasts

By Gabriela Berlanga



Impulsando la creación del capítulo de habla hispana

The dream ignited in 2018, as the notes of "Huapango de Moncayo" resonated during the closing ceremony of ISAAC Australia, finally materialized with the ISAAC Conference in Cancún. However, beyond the celebration of a

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successful event, the birth of the ISAAC Español Chapter became a focal point—an initiative that aimed to unite the Spanish-speaking AAC community.

The ISAAC Conference in Cancún was not just a gathering; it was an international celebration with nearly 600 attendees from 42 different countries. For the first time, a record-breaking number of Spanish-speaking attendees gathered to share, to learn, and to celebrate the formal launch of ISAAC Español.

The establishment of a Spanish-speaking community had been the collective effort of many ISAAC members throughout the years. They began gathering during conferences, with a special push during the conference in Barcelona. The creation of the Academic Group was a strategic move, paving the way for the momentous event at ISAAC Cancun. The formal launch of the ISAAC Español chapter took place during the Welcome Reception of the conference, symbolizing a commitment to supporting the Spanish-speaking AAC community.

Gratitude extends to the companies that supported the launch and those invested in

developing culturally sensitive tools in Spanish. Special acknowledgment is due to researchers exploring AAC in our language for their invaluable contributions.

The success of the first official "ISAAC Español" meeting during the conference was monumental. Attendees from around the world participated, generating a multitude of ideas. Following the conference, the Academic Group continued its monthly meetings. Collaborations with ISAAC International are paving the way for the call for nominations to form the chapter's board in 2024.

The journey from dream to reality was not without its challenges, but the support from the ISAAC community, office staff, and collaborating organizations made it possible. As we embark on this new chapter, we express our sincere gratitude to everyone involved. The ISAAC Español Chapter is more than a platform; it is a testament to the global collaboration that strengthens the field of Augmentative and Alternative Communication.

In the spirit of unity, we extend our thanks to those who have contributed to this journey and invite the Spanish-speaking AAC community to join hands in creating a future where communication knows no boundaries. Together, we write the next chapter of ISAAC's legacy. ¡Adelante, ISAAC Español!

Chapters



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ISAAC-Brazil • www.isaacbrasil.org.br

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ISAAC-Denmark • www.isaac.dk

ISAAC-Español • *Coming soon* - www.isaac-espanol.org

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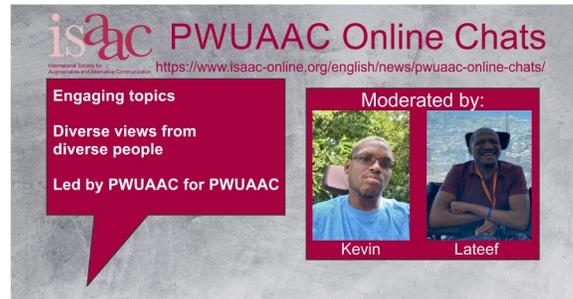
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PWUAAC Online Chats



Visit [PWUAAC Online Chats](#) on the ISAAC website for information about the next scheduled chat.

ISAAC Webinars

As of January 2021, most ISAAC webinars and archived recordings are available as a benefit of membership, and accessed through the Members' Only portal. A limited number of [webinar recordings](#) will remain open to the public. Find out how to become an ISAAC member [here](#).

Contact Us

Do you have a question or comment? Please feel free to send an email to feedback@isaac-online.org

Our Vision & Mission



ISAAC's Vision is that AAC will be recognized, valued and used throughout the world.

ISAAC's Mission is to promote the best possible communication for people with complex communication needs.

ISAAC is a Non-Governmental Organization in consultative status with the United Nations Economic & Social Council.

Stay Connected

ISAAC Chapters and members worldwide are invited to submit items of interest from your country or region. News, AAC practice tips, research, personal essays, in article format or as a link to online articles or resources, will be reviewed and made available on the ISAAC website as appropriate. Please send articles and photos to [Nola Millin](#).

Stay Social

Stay in the loop! Follow ISAAC news & views in the AAC community on our social media!



Staff

Franklin Smith
Executive Director

Carol Silverberg
Membership Coordinator

Cheryl Jackson
Manager of Communications

Chloe Leon
Publications Specialist

Tony Needer
Conference Cancún
Exhibitor Sales Specialist

Judy Shapiro
Conference Cancún
Sponsorship Specialist

*Augmentative and Alternative
Communication AAC*

MaryAnn Romski
Co-editor

Rose Ann Sevcik
Co-editor

Jackie Brown
Editorial Assistant

Nola Millin, Editor
ISAAC Website

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The ISAAC Communicator

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