

Message from the ISAAC President

Tracy Shepherd

As spring rolls into Canada like a lion (meaning lots of snow and cold weather), I am writing this on International Women's Day. The theme for this year is *#EmbraceEquity* which calls on all of us to also recognize the intersectionality of gender and disability. As we acknowledge and support women who use AAC, we must take action to oppose gender bias and inequality while seeking to create a society that is more inclusive and equitable.

While we are honouring women, an extraordinary women and trail blazer, Judy Heumann passed away recently. She was a disability rights advocate and responsible for leading the charge for accessibility rights in the United States. I encourage you to watch *Crip Camp* on Netflix and read her book, *Being Heumann*.

Other sad news is the loss of another AAC founder, David Yoder who passed away in February. USSAAC had the chance to interview him in November for their series on

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[Leaders and Legends](#), so take a look there to read about all his impacts.

It is all too often that we are hearing about leaders and mentors leaving us. This is telling us that AAC is not a new field anymore. Thirty years ago, it was hard to find practitioners who were comfortable or familiar with AAC. The technology was innovative yet big and bulky. As our “In Memoria” list continues to grow, I am reminded that if it were not for all these great leaders, AAC would not be where it is today – an ever-growing field that is more broadly understood and used. We still have a long way to go to realize our goals that everyone can communicate, but we are getting closer. Where will we be in another 30 years?

I was lucky to attend the ATIA conference in Orlando, Florida in January. It was busy, exciting, exhausting and energizing at the same time, which was a good test run for attending ISAAC Cancún. It was amazing to see people so eager to be together in person – the sessions were fantastic and the exhibition hall was outstanding. I was not



used to all the activity and interaction after all this time, so let’s blame the pandemic, not aging.

Several of the ISAAC EB members were on-site at ATIA, so we were able to connect in person to conduct some EB business and enjoy a cold beverage together.



The ISAAC EB is busy with many initiatives, but most of all looking forward to seeing you all in person in Cancún. Now is the time to [register](#) and [book your hotel](#). Mexico is a fantastic place to visit and travel and the conference just gives you another reason to book your trip!

The Call for Papers was extremely successful and all the notices have gone out about acceptances. The schedule will be coming

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soon as the conference committee is hard at work on this tricky task.

This is unprecedented times for ISAAC given we have not had an in-person conference for five years and we are endeavouring to host conferences back-to-back in 2023 and 2024. You can also start thinking about what project and proposals you would like to submit for the ISAAC Roma Conference 2024. ISAAC Italy and our conference organizing company are busy searching sites and accessibility, so planning is well underway.

The ISAAC website redevelopment is also coming along nicely and will incorporate some lovely accessibility features along with a new fresh look and greater integration and functionality.

It is exciting to see new interest groups gaining momentum like ISAAC Español group and the ISAAC Eastern European group. These home-grown interest groups

offer a nice way to bolster interest in AAC in regions as well as enhance connections with the international organization.

My hope for you is that you are starting to find ways of connecting with people as the world becomes more open and that 2023 is shaping up to be an inspiring and productive year in all your pursuits both personally and professionally.

Tracy Shepherd

ISAAC President

*Messages from ISAAC's
President and Executive
Director are available in
French, Italian, and
Portuguese translation on
our website.*

From the Executive Director



Franklin Smith

Welcome to the March 2023 edition of The ISAAC Communicator.

Spring (at least the kind we get here in Toronto, Canada) at this time of year for us northern hemisphere “types” is such a hopeful time. The number of daylight hours are increasing noticeably and, more often than not, we are beginning to see warmer temperatures. This combination does incredible things for the human psyche, at least mine!

Speaking of things beginning to warm up noticeably, the entire ISAAC team is now in “full conference mode”, at T-4 months and counting! Because of this, we are seeing extraordinarily good indications of strong membership and conference registrations for 2023. ISAAC is looking forward to presenting Conference Cancún this July, and then Conference Roma next year in 2024. With that, ISAAC will be able to return to its Biennial

Conference schedule, something I know we all look forward to.

ISAAC Membership 2023

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

As in previous years, members can make use of our [online membership portal](#) to renew an existing membership, or take out a new membership. The ISAAC office has sent out multiple membership reminders during the January through March of 2023 timeframe.

If you are not yet an ISAAC member, join us! Specific membership renewal information is available on the ISAAC website for each of the above as follows:

ISAAC-Australia: [2023 Membership Form](#)

ISAAC-Canada: [2023 Membership Form](#)

ISAAC-US (USSAAC): [2023 Membership Form](#)

ISAAC International (English): [2023 Membership Form](#)

ISAAC Internacional (Español): [2023 Membership Form](#)

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Conference Cancún

The Conference Cancún leadership team continues its work towards presenting our much anticipated in-person conference this year, July 24-27, 2023 (main conference), in beautiful and sunny Cancún, México. The conference offers a robust scientific program with nearly 400 accepted presentations from around the world, as well as Pre-conference Workshops, the AAC Camp and Executive and Council meetings (July 22-23, 2023).

The ISAAC Scientific Program Committee will be spending the month of April producing the schedule of presentations and meetings for Conference Cancún, and we have committed to advising contact authors of accepted presentations of their scheduling information by the end of April 2023.

We are also now heavily engaged with all of our sponsors, exhibitors, and local service providers, including the conference centre, hotels, and others, in order to make this year's conference a fun, safe, and enjoyable experience.

The Conference Cancún online registration

system is [open and available](#) for registrations, and we look forward to finally welcoming the world to the 19th Biennial Conference of ISAAC this July in beautiful (and sunny) Cancún, México! Although Early Bird pricing has now ended, it is not too late to register and attend the conference.

We've secured conference [hotel room blocks](#) at multiple properties, all within an easy and accessible walk to the conference venue, the [Cancun Center](#) (previously called the Cancún ICC). If you book your stay for the duration of the conference at one of the hotels arranged by ISAAC International, and are entering Mexico as a visitor specifically for attending Conference Cancún, you will not have to pay the 16% value-added (IVA) tax.

Conference Roma

During the latter part of March 2023, key individuals from the ISAAC and ISAAC-Italy leadership will be performing site visits of Rome, in conjunction with our selected professional conference organizing company (PCO), Gruppo Symposia, in order to ensure that we are able to present this next conference efficiently, effectively and in as accessible a manner as possible. One of the

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key decision points that will be occurring shortly is the confirmation of dates for Conference Roma. Not an easy task with the Paris Summer Olympic Games occurring during the latter part of July and early August 2024.

ISAAC will be announcing dates for Conference Roma as early as possible during 2023.

ATIA 2023

I was pleased to be able to attend ATIA's 2023 Conference earlier this year in Orlando, Florida. Here at ISAAC, we appreciate and value the partnership in place between ATIA and ISAAC. It was especially gratifying to see such strong attendance at ATIA, which "bodes well" for Conference Cancún attendance. I was able to visit and speak with many of the companies that exhibit with and sponsor ISAAC, and everyone is looking forward to travelling to Cancún this July. Thank you to David Dikter and Caroline van Howe for their tremendous and successful efforts in organizing another fabulous ATIA.

ISAAC International Website Redevelopment

As announced in the March 2022 issue of The Communicator, ISAAC International has embarked on a website redevelopment project.

This project is progressing very well and we are pleased to say that accessibility requirements are always "front and centre" as part of the redesign work.

ISAAC is also going to use this project as an opportunity to directly integrate our conference registration systems into the new website! We are committed to ensuring that all our stakeholders are able to register and pay for future ISAAC conferences in a seamless fashion.

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](#)

ISAAC Executive Director

Important Notice



ISAAC Biennial Membership and Awards Meeting

In accordance with section 8.1.5 of the Bylaws of ISAAC, this is the official notification of the date, time, and location of the upcoming ISAAC Biennial **Membership Meeting**, taking place at the **19th Biennial ISAAC Conference**.

Date: Wednesday, July 26th, 2023

Time: 14:00 to 15:00

Location: Cancún Center (formerly the Cancún ICC)

Bldv. Kukulcan Mz. 48, Punta Cancún, Zona Hotelera, 77500 Cancún, Q.R., México
Room: TBA

*Called by the Chair of the Council,
Signhild Skogdal
March 31st, 2023*

ISAAC Biennial Council Meeting



In accordance with section 11.4 of the Bylaws of ISAAC, this is the official notification of the date, time, and location of the upcoming ISAAC **Council Meeting**, taking place at the **19th Biennial ISAAC Conference**.

Date: Sunday, July 23rd, 2023

Time: 9:00 to 17:00

Location: Cancún Center (formerly the Cancún ICC)

Bldv. Kukulcan Mz. 48, Punta Cancún, Zona Hotelera, 77500 Cancún, Q.R., México
Room: COBA

*Called by the Chair of the Council,
Signhild Skogdal
March 31st, 2023*

Message from the AAC Editors



MaryAnn Romski &
Rose A. Sevcik

In the last issue of 2022, ISAAC announced that we would be taking the reins as Co-Editors of *Augmentative and Alternative Communication*. At the new year, we began our term and we are working very hard as we transition into our new roles. Over the years, we have each served as associate editors and reviewers for the journal. And of course, we have published in the journal a number of times including our 1991 article with Krista Wilkinson entitled “Roles of graphic symbols in the language acquisition process for persons with severe cognitive disabilities” for which we won the Editor’s Award.



For your enjoyment, we include an “early” 1992 photo of us accepting the AAC Editor’s Award with then Editor Lyle Lloyd and Prenke-Romich Company President, Barry Romich.

Augmentative and Alternative Communication, published quarterly by Taylor & Francis, includes peer-reviewed papers focused on all aspects of AAC. As the official journal of ISAAC, it has an international and multidisciplinary readership. The journal has evolved since its inception in 1985. We are the journal’s 12th editorial team and we want to acknowledge all the field’s leaders who have served in this role before us (see Table below).

AAC EDITOR	TERM
David E. Yoder	1985 – 1986
Lyle L. Lloyd	1986 – 1993
David Beukelman	1994 – 1997
Pat Mirenda	1998 – 2001
Teresa Iacono	2002 - 2005
John Todman	2006 - 2007
Ann Sutton	2008 - 2011
Janice Light and David McNaughton	2012 - 2015
Martine Smith and Bronwyn Hemsley	2016 - 2018
Ralf Schlosser and Rajinder Koul	2019 - 2022
MaryAnn Romski and Rose A. Sevcik	2023 - 2024

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There is so much history about our field that is archived in the journal over its 38 years of publication. We want to encourage ISAAC members to read the journal – past and present! You may be surprised by what you'll find. The March 2023 issue of AAC is a special-themed issue on autism put together by our previous editors Ralf Schlosser and Rajinder Koul. And, if you are not a subscriber, we encourage you to subscribe. ISAAC members are eligible for special rates.

Behind the scenes, what is so clear is that the editors do not work alone. It takes an amazing team of volunteers to make the journal function. We have a strong diverse international group of more than 20 associate editors including A. Barton-Hulsey, S. Blackstone, M. Clarke, S. Clendon, S. Dada, S. Deckers, A. Deitz, K. Drager, M. Fried-Oken, M. Granlund, J. McCarthy, J. Murray, I. Ochs, B. Olgetree, J. Sigafos, G. Soto, D Sutherland, K Tonsing, D. Trembath, T. Rackensberger, E. Radici, J. Reichle, B. Robinson, and K. Wilkinson. There are also a substantial number of manuscript reviewers who willingly give of their time to read and assess article

submissions. And, of course, our outstanding editorial assistant, Jackie Brown, who manages the day-to-day business of the journal and the manuscript flow between authors, associate editors, reviewers, editors, and the publisher; without her efforts, the journal does not run!

We encourage you to send your work about AAC issues related to children and adults to the journal so it is shared broadly and archived for future generations. If you have an interest in serving as a reviewer for the journal, please send us an email and include your vita/resume. We look forward to hearing from you at aaceditors@isaac-online.org.



News



Communication Matters



Communication
Matters
more than just talking

Communication Matters International AAC Conference 2023

The Communication Matters annual [International AAC Conference](#) will take place at the University of Leeds from 10-12th September 2023.

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. We have based our topic areas on

the three aspects of evidence-based practice which constitute 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 Experience:** Papers submitted under this heading may include service development, audit or implementation projects, as well as practice reports. Typically, these papers will be presented by health or education professionals or those working for other organisations for AAC users.
- **Personal Stories and Preferences:** Papers submitted under this heading would include personal experience stories, single case studies and examples of AAC in the wider community. We particularly welcome contributions from AAC users and family members.

Again, this year we will be using an online submission programme called AvenTri. You will be asked to login and submit a simple form with a title and a short summary about

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your talk (maximum 300 words).

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

The deadline for submissions is **21 April 2023**. 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/cm2023callforpapers>

Belfast AAC Information Day 2023

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: Thursday 8 June 2023

Venue: Girdwood Community Hub, 10

Girdwood Avenue, Belfast, Antrim BT14 6EG
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](#)
- [Request a place on this AAC Information Day](#)

Booking opens soon!

WELCOME TO COMMUNICATION MATTERS

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



Receive updates from Communication Matters!

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

If you would like to be added to our mailing list, please email admin@communicationmatters.org.uk.

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The Bridge School



HANDS-FREE SUPPORT MOBILITY TO PROMOTE COMMUNICATION AND MORE!

Children with Complex Speech and Physical Impairment Use Hands-Free Support Walkers for Self-Directed Mobility

An important developmental achievement for all children is being able to move with some degree of independence. Crawling, walking and running create opportunities to initiate, explore, express preferences, learn, experiment, solve problems, engage in social interactions and even get in trouble. In fact, studies have demonstrated that self-directed mobility strongly correlates with increases in cognition, language, social interaction, health and well-being (Clearfield, 2011; Walle, 2016; Walle & Campos, 2014). Mobility provides children with physical and visual access to the environment and changes how they interact with objects and people around them

(Adolph 2014; Iverson, 2010).

All children who attend The Bridge School (TBS) have complex speech and physical impairment, which limits their ability to move about independently. Some of them also have cortical visual impairment (CVI). However, instead of spending all day every day at school in a wheelchair or a “stander”, children enrolled at TBS participate in different activities in hands-free support walkers, which provides them with self-directed mobility. A support walker, also referred to as a gait trainer, provides self-directed, upright mobility for children. It supports the pelvis and body with a seat, trunk pads and a headrest, as needed, allowing the hands to be free to explore and reach (e.g., KidWalk; ProneWalk, Pacer, Grillo, Mustang, etc.).

Research has shown that support walkers can promote independence in walking and have positive effects on affect, motivation, and participation in children with cerebral palsy or complex developmental delays (Paleg and Livingstone, 2015). Students using support walkers at TBS have demonstrated an increase in interactions with peers and objects, participation and engagement in

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activities, the use of their upper extremities for reaching and touching, initiation, problem solving opportunities, self-determination, and use of their vision. Research projects are currently underway at TBS to study the use of hands-free support walkers with children with complex speech and physical needs.

More information on the use of the hands-free support walkers at TBS can be found in the webinar given by Christine Wright-Ott, OTR-L using this link:
<https://cvi.bridgeschool.org/webinars/> (i.e., Webinar Seven: *The Significance of Self-Initiated Mobility Experiences for Children with CVI, Complex Communication and Physical Impairments*).

References:

Adolph, K. E., & Tamis-LeMonda, C. S. (2014). The costs and benefits of development: The transition from crawling to walking. *Child development perspectives*, 8(4), 187-192.

Clearfield, M. W. (2011). Learning to walk changes infants' social interactions. *Infant Behavior and Development*, 34(1), 15-25.

Iverson, J. M. (2010). Developing language in a developing body: The relationship between motor development and language development. *Journal of child language*, 37(2), 229-261.

Paleg, G., & Livingstone, R. (2015). Outcomes of gait trainer use in home and school settings for children with motor impairments: a systematic review. *Clinical Rehabilitation*, 29(11), 1077-1091.

Walle, E. A. (2016). Infant social development across the transition from crawling to walking. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 7, 960.

Walle, E. A., & Campos, J. J. (2014). Infant language development is related to the acquisition of walking. *Developmental Psychology*. 50(2), 336.

The Bridge School Needs Your Help!

The Bridge School is conducting a survey project to gather information on the use of hands-free support walkers with children with complex speech and physical impairments. If you are a parent or care provider of these children or a professional or paraprofessional

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who works with them, please help us by completing [this survey](#).



*Your participation in taking our survey is voluntary and your responses are anonymous

ISAAC Denmark



At The Danish ISAAC Conference 2022, AAC Users Gathered About The Topic "Art As Communication" By Rikke Thomsen

ISAAC Denmark experienced great support related to user activities at the ISAAC Conference 2022. Many AAC users exhibited their art for the pleasure of all conference

participants. Even more AAC users took part in the User Meeting, where the topic was "Art As Communication".

Exhibition

In ISAAC Denmark, we were thrilled, being able to create an art exhibition in the foyer of the conference center, where the exhibiting artists had the use of Alternative and Augmentative forms of communication in common. Many of the exhibitors themselves participated in the User Meeting, and several of them as well at the entire conference. The members of the ISAAC Denmark board are grateful that so many chose to share their time and art with the audience. Many other conference participants showed high interest in the art exhibition, which was frequently visited during the breaks. Since many of the exhibitors participated at the conference, other conference participants used the opportunity to approach the artists to gain knowledge about them as persons and their works, which brought an alternative opportunity to establish contact between the conference participants.

The exhibition became possible because of a reach out from ISAAC Denmark to every AAC user we could reach, in order to contribute to the exhibition with finished works.

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User Meeting

At the User Meeting, 16 ASK speakers were gathered physically and online, including 1 representative from ISAAC Sweden and 2 from ISAAC Norway. As a presenter, we had invited the artist Frank Dalhoff, who paints, writes poems and works sculpturally in beton and clay, all of it by his specially designed forehead stick, which he handles with extensive precision.

Frank Dalhoff, who himself has severe Cerebral Palsy, and uses alternative communication, was a great inspiration for both the physically present, and the online participating AAC users. During his presentation, he showed examples of what he practically does when he works with his art. Including how his helper assists, when necessary, for example when tools have to be changed in the forehead stick.

Below, Frank Dalhoff himself describes his working with art:

"In a way, I use art to escape from my disability, even though my art is a part of me and thus by my disability. When I work with art, I am like in a bubble, where time and

place are not present, only the **canvas**, the colors, and I exist."

Frank Dalhoff furthermore explained that art gives him the opportunity to express things, he otherwise would not have been able to say. The other participants agreed with his consideration because art is much more **nuanced/detailed** than words, especially words, that are already difficult to express clearly.

At the User Meeting, the AAC users' Art Exhibition in the foyer was a topic too. The exhibitors presented their works and had exciting conversations and discussions regarding the topic "Art As Communication".

In the joint reflection, I became interested to know whether it was important for the participants' artistic processes and products that most of them are dependent on practical help during the processes. It turned out that this is not an issue for the artists as **self-reliance/ independence** is not a prerequisite for being able to express an independent attitude, feeling, and identity through art.

In my opinion, this gives substance to think about how we use the two concepts of **self-reliance and independence**. There was a high consensus among the participants - both those

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online and those present in the room that the meeting had offered much inspiration for testing new forms of artistic expression. The participants could also imagine participating in a weekend gathering where you can work in various creative workshops. Among the participants, it varied a lot in which artistic forms of expression they were interested in. Interests ranged from writing to music, film, painting, dance etc. We hope that this gathering will become a reality one day.

Art - a spacious and exciting form of communication

Art is a very broad and inclusive concept, and therefore there is room for everyone to be involved. There are many forms of artistic expression, and ways of participation. The processes are not determined in advance, therefore for most of the artists, there is no goal given in advance, but the product may contain exactly the meaning, that the individual places in it, depending on the looking eyes, and the experiences and feelings, that each artist carries with them.

More AAC users at the Danish ISAAC events

In general, ISAAC Denmark works hard to ensure that the ISAAC Conference is attractive to AAC users, and that they find it relevant to participate. We think that it is crucial that AAC users become visible at the conference, both as participants and presenters.

One initiative is that the AAC users have their own “User Meeting” at the Conference. Every year, the User Meeting deals with a specific topic, that is chosen on the basis of participant suggestions. A presenter is often invited as an inspiration, like in 2022, when the artist Frank Dalhoff was invited.

Another ISAAC Danmark initiative is the annual “Autumn Meeting”, especially for AAC users. The meeting runs from Friday afternoon to Sunday noon. At the meeting, there is time for immersion within a topic with one or even several presenters, time for discussions, exchange of experiences with each other, and pleasant social get-together. At the Autumn Gathering in November 2022, the topic was “Music – AAC Users As Active Music Performers”. This topic was chosen as one of the forms of expression, that the participants at a previous AAC user event told they were interested in.

Chapters



ISAAC-Australia • www.isaacaustralia.com

ISAAC-Brazil • www.isaacbrasil.org.br

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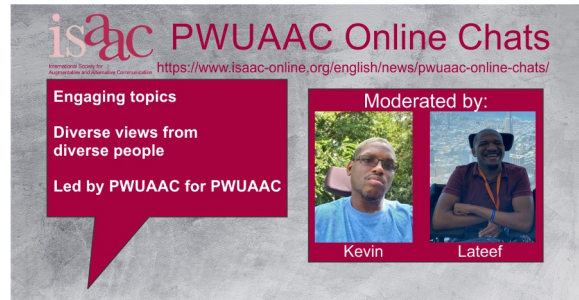
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Contact Us

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

PWUAAC Online Chats



Visit [PWUAAC Online Chats](https://www.isaac-online.org/english/news/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](#).



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!



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The ISAAC Communicator

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