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**Centre for Augmentative
 and Alternative
 Communication**

CREATING NEW OPPORTUNITIES

National Newsletter

Light up a life! The story of a lighthouse.



Lighthouses warn boats about rocks, shallow water or other dangers and can even guide boats during foggy weather. They have been around for a long time, and will continue to be around for times to come. Historians have recorded that the harbour of Alexandria was marked between the years of 283 and 277 B.C. with a 500-foot lighthouse on the island of Paros.

AAC has not been around as long as that, but the first record of unaided communication can be traced back to the 16th century when Benedictine monks who had taken vows of silence, started using gestures to communicate. For more than 400 years (from the 15th to the 19th Century), sailing around the South African coastline was a deadly business. In fact, there are an estimated 2000-plus shipwrecks along the 3000km treacherous coastline – just about one ruined vessel for every coastal kilometre. In the 1800s, the first South African lighthouses were erected as a response to these shipwrecks. One example is the Cape Agulhas Lighthouse which was the direct result of local farmers’ pleas to the authorities after they had seen one shipwreck victim too many on their beaches. Today there are 45 lighthouses in South Africa. Thinking back on 2013, I cannot help but think of AAC as a lighthouse of sorts in the rehabilitation sea. Like the original bonfires which were replaced with iron baskets filled with burning wood or coal, which were again replaced by oil or gas

lanterns in olden day lighthouses so too the tools, strategies and methods that we use in the AAC field have changed and been adapted over the past two decades. Technology, in particular the invention of the Fresnel lens changed the functionality of lighthouses for ever, as it could now project an intense beam of light that was visible up to 28 miles away. Similarly, non-dedicated technology with AAC applications like the iPad, the iPod and other Android devices are making technology more available, more accessible and more affordable than ever before in history. I have no doubt that a greater applicability to more individual needs will soon follow. Every lighthouse had its own unique code: a light shining on and off for a set number of seconds so that passing ships knew where they were in the darkness. Likewise, different intervention strategies have unique qualities and therapists and teachers should become more skilled in explaining the differences to parents, in order to help parents make informed decisions. Researchers need to do more comparative studies to highlight these uniqueness. The unique codes of the lighthouses also extended to the light-keepers who all had their own distinctive characteristics: some were fishermen, some painters and some were super-handymen. However they all shared a love and knowledge of the sea, were slightly insomniac, understood the importance of keeping the light burning at all costs, could fathom the challenge when supplies ran out and rose to the occasion when there were hapless souls to be saved and ships to be diverted. All proved to be great under extreme pressure. Similarly, AAC does not belong to one only one professional discipline – the field needs diverse disciplinary (Cont..)



Interface promotes communication for people with little or no functional speech by supplementing existing communication with gestures, communication boards and assistive technology (thus, augmentative and alternative communication)

(Cont from pg 1)

backgrounds to function optimally. But like all light keepers we share a love and knowledge of AAC, we respect and value the individuals with whom we work and understand the importance of keeping communication going at all times and preventing communication breakdowns.

We hope you all had a happy and restful December as we celebrated the Light, and that all the “slightly insomniac light keepers” caught up on much needed sleep (literally and figuratively!) so that all our little lights can burn brightly in 2014!



Juan Bornman
Guest Editor
 Director, Centre for AAC

Interface Branch News

News from Interface KZN

The past few months have as usual, been busy for our team. Avishana and Jocelyn presented an Assistive Technology Workshop on the 23rd August 2013 which was specifically targeted at professionals and educators who work with high technology AAC devices. The content of the workshop included, The Grid 2 and Communicator; switch access (types of switches and using switch with Grid 2 and Communicator); alternative switch access (Smart Nav and eye control); and using the Ipad and tablet with relevant communication apps. The workshop itself was a success, well attended by people actively working in the field of AAC, who were thus able to relate to the content and participate actively in all the practical sessions.

The follow-up visit for our project with the Sisizakele Special School took place 16 to 18th September. The visit included observation time being spent in the autistic and the grade R classes. Following the observation ideas for the implementation of AAC in the classroom to assist the relevant children were provided and modeled. In the autism class, the use of voice output devices (Big Mac, Step by Step, Supertalker) was modeled within ring time and within an activity between the three children present. In the grade R class attention was given to children specifically identified on the previous

visit as being AAC candidates. These children were provided with devices and shown how to use them. The Art class was then visited where 2 children previously identified as being in need of AAC devices were learning. The children were provided with devices and given instruction in the use of these. The teacher provided input regarding topics currently being taught and the vocabulary that would be needed for these, which was included in the devices. France Mngenge was part of our team as an AAC Mentor, and presented to the teachers on his experiences as an AAC user going to school. This was followed by a question and answer session in which both France and Rose participated with the teachers asking questions. A discussion session was held on CAPS curriculum adaptations and modifications for children who use AAC. The teachers grappled with the challenge identifying ways that they could assess and include children using AAC into their classes. Time was also spent developing curriculum resources according to the principles identified in the curriculum adaptation session as well as applying these principles to the needs of individual children who had been addressed in class in the morning sessions. Teachers made communication boards using Board-maker as well as PowerPoint books. This was an exceptionally worthwhile session as the teachers really began to integrate the knowledge that had been provided to them during the previous days, as demonstrated by the depth of questions they were beginning to ask. France was a great asset during this session as he became a support for the teachers guiding them through the technical production of PowerPoint books. On the final morning plans had to be changed as the teachers had been so moved by France's presentation that they requested France present again to the children in their classes. This was done in 2 classes and was exceptionally well received by the children. They asked a variety of questions and were well engaged. Overall the uptake of input from the therapists by the teachers was excellent as seen in the use of ideas in the classroom as well as the manner in which the teachers engaged and problem solved practical sessions. France's input was extremely important with the staff being astounded that an AAC user could have completed Grade 12. Interface KZN wish the staff and children of Sisizakele Special School well and trust that they will continue to grow in their use of AAC and their support of children with little or no functional speech.

Following on from the success of our Communication Circle for teenagers/young adults (now a regular monthly group), we have also initiated a Communication Circle for Pre-school children. This group will be headed up by Avishana, and we have been blessed to have received funding for this project very early on. This communication circle is open for children between the ages of 3 and 7 years who are using a high tech AAC device. Children must be accompanied by a parent or facilitator/caregiver.

Pree Parumaul will be taking over from Kirsty in heading up the Communication Circle. This monthly group continues to be a wonderful place for the development of friendships and support between our teenage and young adult AAC users. These support service range from, helping to write a "skit" to be done at the assembly of one of our users, to increasing the awareness and knowledge of AAC in the school, to sharing about the role of mothers and others in our growth. The group members are all looking forward to the end of year event..... and we know that the circle will continue to grow and develop into the New Year.

We are very sad to have to say farewell to Kirsty Bastable who has been involved in various capacities with Interface KZN for many years. Kirsty has in the past been on our committee, but in more recent years, has been an indispensable and valuable member of our therapy team. Kirsty and her husband will be relocating to Holland at the end of this month, and will also be in Texas in the future. Kirsty has always been involved in Interface KZN training and projects and has also headed up the Communication Circle for Teenagers/Adults since its inception. We wish her and Sean all the very best for their travels and careers, and hope that we will see Kirsty back in sunny SA in the not too distant future!

Felicity Jonck
Chairperson: Interface KZN

**Interface KZN isiZulu AAC
Resources and Literacy
Project**

KwaZulu Natal is the second most populous province in South Africa (according to the 2011 census, Wikipedia informs me); That is, of the 51(plus) million people living in South Africa, over 10 million live in KwaZulu Natal - and so they should, since it is the most beautiful place to be. More to the point, of this 10 million, some 78% of the KZN population is Zulu speaking. Glancing at the mission of Interface KZN "to support adults and children who have little or no functional speech by providing training and opportunities for them to use AAC" we cannot fail to notice that a large portion of the efforts need to be dedicated specifically to AAC in isiZulu. This project has been on going for two full years now and has built up quite a library of resources which are freely available for download from the website:

www.interface-kzn.co.za

To begin with much work attended to the translation of existing English materials. Over time however, although the translated materials proved to be highly valuable in test runs and in use in therapy, a growing awareness is rising gently but persistently convincing us that the isiZulu AAC resources need to be unique,

running through with culture and those things which set isiZulu apart as a language in its own right. As the library continues to grow we hope and aim that it will grow with such resources.



Printable books and additional resources

To whet your appetite, described in the rest of the article are some examples of what is available. In my mind I categorise the resources as per their use, of course there is cross over between these categories, but I find a little organization helps. Foundational resources are those to which one might look for use with beginning AAC users, when you want lots of exposure to the symbols you are using, and lots of practice with them. Here then we have a number of song and rhyme boards gathered from KZN's Grade R classes' morning chants and sing songs. There are also a number of story books adapted with symbols which may be downloaded from the web. Adding more interaction with symbols, Tholile Tholile is a bingo game using the most frequently used AAC symbols in the adapted story books.



Games

Not all the resources make use of picture symbols, but where they do, all of the symbols used are Picture Communication Symbols are made using Boardmaker from Mayer-Johnson. These resources require that the person seeking to use them have the Boardmaker programme.

Then there are those resources that in my mind, I call Communication resources and these are targeted for the use of AAC now for communication. There are topic specific communication boards, device overlays with intended context use and communication fans. Games cannot be left out and Lutho Mfana is a great social communication builder, players have to ask each other for cards to complete their sets before everyone else to win! A starter communication system is also available for you to download and get started with a comprehensive communication book. You are meant to add words as you and the AAC

user deem necessary; it was designed with grade R learners in mind, so includes a whole section on the weather!

Finally there are resources which attempt specifically to deal with literacy development and academic learning. Again the story books come into play. When you access the website, you will see many of the books have not only the key word adaptations, but may also have worksheets for use with the story.



There are worksheets designed for printing out, and there are others which are intended for dynamic use (use on the computer – particularly for learners who have complex access issues when it comes to handling paper and pen). There are some books which target sounds and encourage awareness of phonemes. Some of the books may also be downloaded in PowerPoint format to aid access to independent reading (some are also narrated, but you can turn the sound off if you don't want it)

For interactive handling of text, the picture based bingo game mentioned

earlier also has a text format, and another game



Washa Nginalo is a text only bingo game with levels of difficulty of the length and complexity of the words the learner needs to decipher. A variety of 'alternative pencils' enhance access to letters and writing for learners with physical disabilities which prevent or inhibit the traditional pen and paper route.

There is no cost to accessing these items. However, feedback on your experiences accessing and using these resources will be highly valuable and much appreciated

**Mrs. Jocelyn Mngomezulu
for Interface KZN**

School news

Pathways – Pretoria End-of-the-Year Bustle

Another busy year draws to a close at Pathways and the fun continues as the festive season begins.

The senior classes are dazzling us with an array of deliciously healthy summer salads that they have been preparing in life-skills class. These learners have the green finger touch as they make the salads with products grown in their very own vegetable garden here at school!



Meanwhile, the young adults are sewing up a storm at the studio. These industrious workers are making unique and exquisite bags from recycled materials. These bags carry the "nXa" label and will be sold at various outlets, including Christmas markets. The bag

project is part of the young adults' small business initiative.



We are also looking forward to the yearly Outreach Christmas party for

children in Soshanguve and Hammanskraal. We are busily collecting donations of sweets and toys to give to the children in this area. Pathways learners are getting into the Christmas spirit by wrapping and decorating the gifts for them. We are also making Christmas crackers with sweets and gifts in, following a schedule. Everybody at Pathways joins hands to wish you a joyous festive season filled with peace and love.

**Liz Steward
Pathways Pretoria**

CAAC News

Goodbye Prof Kitty Uys...



In Ecclesiastes 3, the Bible teaches us that there is a time for everything... a time to weep and a time to laugh, a time to scatter stones and a time to gather them, a time to be silent and a time to speak... and I suppose we could add a time to arrive and a time to leave. But I also know that it is not always easy to accept these times of constant change and it is never easy to say goodbye. In fact, when Kitty told me that she had been offered the Head of Department position at the Department of Occupational Therapy at the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal, I felt like the astronomer who exclaimed: "I refuse to accept Pluto's resignation as a planet".

Over the long period of time that Prof Uys spent at the Centre for AAC, she was more than simply a lecturer and associate professor; she was also a colleague, mentor and friend to many of us. She is part of the rare breed of people who can sense when team members are in trouble and unable to meet a deadline, and then she will step in and help. It was amazing how work became fun when she was around and we will greatly miss her laughter that often echoed down the corridors. We will all miss her presence greatly, and we know that it will be difficult to fill the void created by her absence in the Centre.

King Solomon continues to write in verse 12: "I know that there is nothing better for people than to be happy and to do good while they live". We know that Kitty will do much good in her new position and affect the lives of many individuals that will cross her path and these are the things that bring with them great happiness.

Kitty, thank you for all you did at the Centre and for all you meant to every single one of us. We are really going to miss you! Although we all wish that you

could stick around for a little longer, we know that life has set some other amazing plans for you. We all wish you a heartfelt good luck for your future. Keep in touch!

Prof. Juan Bornman
Director, Centre for AAC

Diane Nelson Bryen Appointed Extraordinary Professor

In 1964, The Beatles vaulted to the Number 1 spot on the US hit parade for the first time, with "*I Want to Hold Your Hand*", and at the same time, Diane Nelson Bryen started her career at Temple University as a pre-graduate student, eventually graduating with a masters degree in special education and a Ph.D. in educational psychology.



In 1973 she started lecturing at Temple University (Philadelphia, US) as a special education faculty member, and in 1991 she became the executive director of the Institute on Disabilities, a position she held until her retirement in 2008.

During her long and lustrous academic career she was awarded with a Fulbright scholar award and winner of the Lindback and Great Teacher awards. She has always been a tireless advocate for people with disability and founded the ACES (Augmentative Communication and Empowerment Support) program, which has also spread to Australia, India, South Africa, and Israel earning her many more awards from the various agencies for people with disabilities that she's helped.

Her collaboration with the Centre for AAC in South Africa started in 1995 when she visited to help develop the Fofa program, loosely based on ACES. Following this visit, she has been back 5 times, to continue collaborating and networking. In 2009 she was selected to present the prestigious Neville Cohen Memorial Lecture, with a paper entitled "*Finding your voice: The Road to Empowerment*".

Her work on human rights, sexual abuse and justice conducted with staff members from the Centre for AAC has resulted in two recent ISI-accredited publications in peer reviewed journals. Her June 2013 visit focused on creating case law for the use of AAC in South African courts. Currently Prof Bryen and Prof Juan Bornman are also co-editing an International book on the issue of abuse of people with little or no functional speech, exploring the scope of the problem internationally and looking at possible preventative measures. The publication of their book is expected towards the end of 2013.

Professor Emerita Diane Nelson Bryen was appointed as a Extraordinary Professor at the University of Pretoria in 2013 – and we are proud welcome her and benefit from her expertise and passion as the Centre for AAC continues its fight towards access to legal justice for individuals with disabilities. We can think of no better person to help us with this endeavour and echo The Beatles song of almost 50 years ago: *“We want to hold your hand!”*

Juan Bornman
Director, Centre of AAC

**Welcome
 Dr Cival Mills**

My name is Cival Mills. I am a qualified medical doctor suffering from Locked in Syndrome. I cannot move and I cannot speak. I have been blessed to get work at the Centre for AAC at the University of Pretoria.



My biggest, almost suicidal frustration since the accident has been, and still is communication. (so called “normal people” usually are not willing to communicate with people who cannot

communicate back; resulting in the loss of self-esteem and utter loneliness.)

Not being able to speak is a 25 hour torture out of every 24-hour day of your life

One day, out of sheer desperation and without any real hope, I went to the Centre for Augmentative and Alternative Communication; University

of Pretoria and without trying to sound over-the-top, I want to state today that I owe my life to them. I became a person again.

Ask any of the FOFA participants how using an AAC device has changed their lives. Most of them can now use the technology I am able to use. My AAC device is a simple, small, and loud but has good visibility and long battery life. One big issue though, it is ridiculously expensive. These devices can be bought for approximately R47000.



When my wheelchair has a problem, it’s devastating but when something goes wrong with my Lightwriter it’s more than devastating! Does the phrase **“Nuclear disaster in Japan ring a bell?”** “ It causes exactly the same magnitude of disaster in my personal life! It is my voice!!!

My communication devices and language programs are definitely my most important assistive tools in a disabled world. When one cannot speak or mime, you have no way to project your own personality. You cannot raise an opinion, you cannot complain, beg or thank. I can now do all of that, as well as motivational speeches, in different languages!

Through the Centre for AAC I was able to set the bar on the highest level again (and to do the exceptional!) in the so called “normal” world. I actually cannot describe in any language or words, or on any communication device, how much my life was changed for the better with their ongoing aid; I salute them!

I want my life to count and impact those around me positively. I am currently working on a project which I will be able to share with everyone once I have everything in place. I sincerely hope the University will assist me in turning this project into a reality.

Dr PC Mills
AAC disability consultant & mentor
Centre for AAC

Welcome Terrence Mahlangu



Hello everyone. My name is Terrence, I must say I am very happy to be part of this wonderful caring group of people. I am a qualified computer technician. I studied IT at a college called AVL (Advance Vi dual Learning Group) for three years which is affiliated with Boston College (BCC). I am a very fun, hard working guy who loves people, a person that you can talk to when you are in need. I remember while I was still in school one lady said to me that I am a good listener and a good adviser.

Here at the Centre I work as a technical assistant mainly dealing with devices, maintaining them and making sure that they function properly as well as assisting people with disabilities.

My first project when I first got to the centre was assisting with the FOFA participants during the Fofa week. It was overwhelming for me to work and interact with people with severe disabilities who could not communicate. I wondered how I was going to effectively contribute to this group.



I remembered the guidance and teachings I received from Dr. Mills who introduced me to the centre. I was able to utilize the little experience that I received from him in working with a person with a disability. My wish is that my presence here at the Centre will be put to great use.

Terrence Mahlangu
Administrator assistant,
Centre CAAC

John Costello's Communication Vulnerability in the ICU Workshop

Patient provider care is not a well-known strategy in South Africa and this workshop by Mr John Costello from the Boston Children's Hospital proposed the beginning of a new phase in assisting communication vulnerable patients to be able to communicate in the hospital context.



Specific attention was given to individuals who are in ICU and who cannot communicate e.g. due to ventilation, patients who use AAC as well as terminally ill patients who need to communicate while receiving palliative care. Various examples of possible AAC strategies which can be used to assist healthcare staff to understand the needs of the communication vulnerable patient were discussed.

Message banking (a process where the patient's voice is recorded and saved on a communication device before the onset of the loss of speech, i.e. with patients with degenerative diseases who will lose their ability to speak) was also addressed in detail.

Twelve PhD students attended, 10 post graduate alumni registered with the HPCSA, as well as 23 other healthcare professionals throughout South Africa (such as Cape Town, Bloemfontein, Mid-delburg-Mpumalanga, Johannesburg and Pretoria). All attendees were of the opinion that this hands-on workshop would give them a lot of insight and new knowledge on how to address communication vulnerable patients' needs.

A proposed research project is planned for the future where the possible implementation of AAC in hospitals in South Africa will be investigated. (Please contact ensa.johnson@up.ac.za if you are interested that the hospital where you are working be involved in this project.)

Ensa Johnson
Centre for AAC

Workbook adaptation project for the DBE

Making a difference in the participation of learners with severe disabilities in the classroom: Workbook adaptation project (Department of Basic Education)

Three years ago the Department of Basic Education approached the Centre for AAC to assist in the adaptation of workbooks for learners with severe disabilities. It was decided to start with the adaptation of the workbooks for Grade 1 to 3.

The aim of the project (which was completed in two phases over the last 18 months) was to assist learners with severe disabilities and complex communication needs to be active participants in the classroom. An AAC kit was developed which include kits for learners (per grade) and kits for educators (per grade).

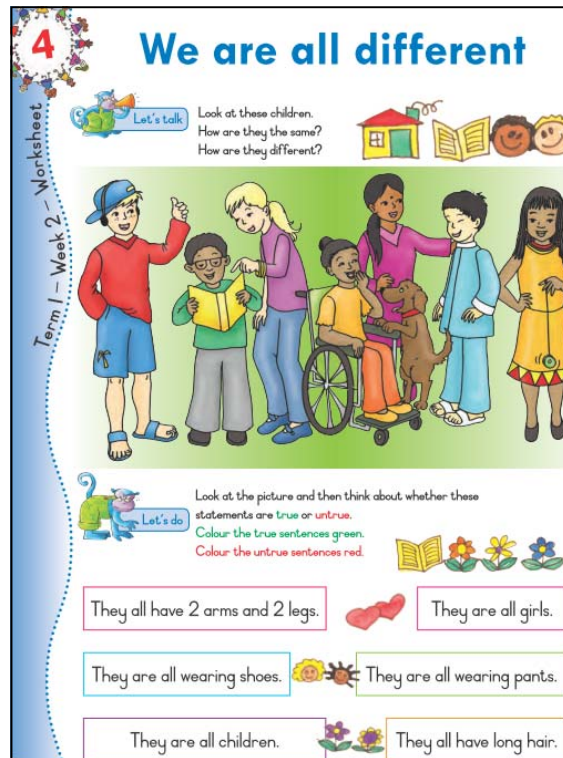
The learners' kit includes a communication folder (which will become the property of the individual learner, which he/she will also be able to take home and use as a communication tool at home as well and not only in the classroom); communication boards per topic (lesson theme), stored in a ring bind file, which will be added to the communication folder during the different lessons. Furthermore, communication cards which will be displayed on a lanyard, i.e. to be used during break time or outings, will also be part of the learners' kit. Sticker books (per grade and divided into the three subjects) with possible answers from which the learner can choose, will be provided as a tool for those who cannot write themselves. However, the assistance of a peer or teacher aide is necessary to paste the stickers within the workbook. The workbooks will be printed in an A3 format to ensure that the learners can work easier in the books.

The educators' kit includes a general guide on the implementation of AAC in the classroom, step-by-step guides per subject and grade (Literacy, Mathematics, Life Skills) with practical suggestions on how to assist learners to use the communication boards and other materials provided in the learners' kits during each lesson. Posters/wall charts (with AAC symbols), big symbols (to be used on choice boards), magnetic symbols (for use on blackboard or by learners on tin sheets/cookie trays) will also be included in the educators' kit.

Suggestions to purchase specific AAC devices, a BoardMaker CD (to make new communication boards or worksheets) and other learning materials for schools were made to the DBE. In the general guide for teachers, practical suggestions were provided on how to adapt existing material to enable learners with severe disabilities to also use these. I always say "Velcro is a teacher's best friend", as a lot of the adaptations can be done with the use of this wonderful product.

It is proposed that the printing of the material will be done early 2014 and hopefully the project will be finalized and implemented in the schools by the middle of 2014.

It was a privilege to be part of this important project to make a difference in the lives of learners with severe disabilities within the schools in South Africa.



**Ensa Johnson
Centre for AAC**

Hamlet Awards

The Centre for AAC received the prestigious Hamlet Award for its work with people with intellectual disabilities.



Prof Juan Bornman and Dr Alecia Samuels from the Centre for AAC, seen here with Dr Aaron Motsoaledi, the National Minister of Health, who was the guest speaker at the Hamlet Foundation Awards.

At a gala event held at the Indaba Hotel on Friday 8 November, the Centre for Augmentative and Alternative Communication, was proud to be honoured as one of the 2013 recipients of the Hamlet Foundation awards.

For the past 19 years, the Hamlet Foundation, in association with the Clinix Health Group, has bestowed this national award (the only one of its kind in South Africa) on individuals and organisations who have made an outstanding contribution to the upliftment and quality of life of people with intellectual disability. Accepting the award on behalf of the Centre for AAC, proud director, Prof Juan Bornman, thanked the Hamlet Foundation for acknowledging the Centre’s steadfast advocacy, research and teaching work in the disability sector over the past 23 years. “We are honoured to be associated with an organisation like the Hamlet Foundation that seeks to promote the empowerment of individuals with intellectual disability.” She went on to say that “People with intellectual disabilities are not charity cases and do not want to be objects of pity. Like every citizen of our country, people with intellectual disabilities want opportunities to participate in all aspects of society. This is possibly best encapsulated in the following quote of Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu, ‘We are not interested in picking up the crumbs of compassion thrown from the table of someone who considers himself our master. We want the full menu of human rights.’”

More about the Hamlet Foundation: From its humble beginnings in 1954, the Hamlet Foundation today provides services and facilities for intellectually disabled children and adults, including a school for 270 children, a residential centre facility for 43 adults and a protective workshop for 140 workers with intellectual disability. To find out how you can become a friend of the Hamlet Foundation, visit their website www.hamlet.org.za

Alecia Samuels
Centre for AAC

Hakuna Matata in Kenya



Karibu! Jambo! The friendly welcoming greeting in Kenya reflects how visitors are treated. Juan Bornman and Enid Moolman attended the 5th East African Conference on Communication Disability that was held in Mombasa, Kenya from 2-5 September 2013.



Attending this conference signifies how important the Centre for AAC at the University of Pretoria takes its strategic initiative of internationalization, but with a focus on Africa. This conference started in 2005 with only 6 participants and has grown to a vibrant international conference with 120 delegates with representatives from all 5 countries of the East African Community (Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Rwanda and Burundi), as well as other African countries such as Malawi, Ghana and Nigeria, Europe, the USA, UK, Israel, Australia, Germany, the Netherlands and New Zealand. During the conference we made a lot of new friends and started forming stronger networks, e.g. with Belinda Bukari from The Unit School for Special Needs in Effiduasi Ghana and Clement Ntim from the Akuamo

Acheampong Unit School for Special Needs Children in Nkawkaw, Ghana, as well as with Victor Kasembe from Tanzania. We also met with Martin Kavua Nafukho from the Kenya Institute of Special Education (KISE) who graciously volunteered to translate the “*Yes you can tell and be heard*” communication boards that are used to disclose abuse, into Kiswahili. Swahili serves as a national or official language of four nations namely Tanzania, Kenya, Uganda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo and it is also one of the official languages of the African Union. Although only around five million people speak Swahili as their mother tongue, it is used as a lingua franca in much of the southern half of East Africa. The total number of Swahili speakers therefore exceeds 140 million (Wikipedia, Retrieved September 2013). We therefore trust that these boards will touch many people’s lives on the African continent.

The theme of the conference was *Unity is strength: speech language therapy for African contexts (Umoja ni Nguvu)*. This conference truly provided a forum for delegates to unite and to expand and share knowledge with the latest techniques, research discoveries and contributions to evidence based practice. It also provided a platform to develop professional and social relationships, thus promoting collaboration in the field of Speech Language Therapy, across Africa and at an international level.



We would like to congratulate the conference committee for a most successful and enjoyable conference. We are looking forward to the next East African Conference on Communication Disability which will be held in Arusha, Tanzania, in 2015.

Asanteni sana!

Enid Moolman
Centre for AAC

The US Report

It is 14h30 US Eastern Time and I am reporting live from the offices of Georgia State University... Leaving the editorship in the capable hands of my colleague, Refilwe Morwane, I have stepped up to be the US correspondent for this newsletter edition! I have the privilege of being a visiting scholar at GSU, Atlanta, Georgia, for seven weeks.



My hosts are Dr MaryAnn Romski and Dr Rose Sevcik, who are of the most prominent scholars in AAC. Their work has included groundbreaking AAC intervention studies both with adolescents with intellectual disabilities

(reported in their book, *Breaking the Speech Barrier*, published in 1996) and, more recently, toddlers with neurodevelopmental conditions. Some of their work with toddlers was presented at the Centre for AAC in May this year by Andrea Barton, a doctoral fellow from Georgia State University, who visited South Africa. Hoping to implement some of these interventions in South Africa, we have been collaborating on a joint research project to develop appropriate materials for such interventions, hoping to ‘pave the way’ for such a larger project. Apart from jointly analyzing some data, I have the opportunity to get to understand local AAC practice and training a little better – the amazing opportunities of device funding and vendor support, but also the challenges of appropriate system management and implementation. I have also had the opportunity to attend a variety of interesting presentations by scholars and experts in health, education, psychology and linguistics – with topics ranging from quantifying social engagement in infants and young children with sophisticated video, audio and skin saturation recordings, unraveling the predictors of reading success, the new DSM criteria for autism, and on finding ways to translate evidence-based practice from the lab or clinic to real life. It is an absolute privilege to be part of this vibrant and stimulating academic community for a little while. As an extra bonus I have had the opportunity to explore the great city of Atlanta, and have been

introduced to local food and customs, such as pumpkin carving! I am truly enjoying my stay here and am very grateful to all who have made it possible. MaryAnn, Rose and Andrea as well as other students and faculty members have made me feel very welcome and have gone the extra mile to make my stay comfortable, pleasant and incredibly enriching. My sincere thanks also go to my colleagues back home who are holding the fort and shouldering my responsibilities in the meantime – you are the best!



Partaking of the local pumpkin carving customs with Andrea Barton :)



**Kerstin Tonsing
Centre for AAC
In Atlanta, Georgia USA**

Praat Afrikaans

The collaboration research project “**Speech and Language Delays in Children with Neurodevelopmental Disorders in South Africa**” between the Centre for AAC at the University of Pretoria and its international collaborators, Prof Mary Ann Ronski and Dr. Rose Sevcik from Georgia State University has gained significant momentum this year with successful data collection taking place all over South Africa.

The CAAC Team consisting of Prof. Juan Bornman, Prof. Kitty Uys, Dr Alecia Samuels and Ms Ensa Johnson recently flew down to Cape Town for a week from the 14th – 18th October and administered the translated Afrikaans Mullen Scales of Early learning. They were joined by former masters in AAC student, Ms. Sonja Higham, and a research assistant, Ms. Jodine Smith.



They started the week at the Red Cross War Memorial Children's Hospital in Cape Town where they tested 18 Afrikaans-speaking children. The

speech-language therapists at Red Cross, under the guidance of the head therapist, Ms. Lezanne le Roux who provided invaluable support! They arranged the individual sessions, planned the time slots, shared office space and arranged for additional venues where undisturbed assessment could be done. A word of appreciation also goes to the Chairperson of the Hospital Research Review Committee, Dr. Blake for providing consent for working in the hospital. What a vibrant enthusiastic team in a caring, well-run hospital – thank you to all!



Next stop – Stellenbosch. Mr Wilfren Pietersen, the chairman of the Board at the Jessie Keet Nursery School provided consent for the testing of the 2 – 5 year olds. Mrs. Felicity Thomas, the principal, and her team of dedicated, loving teachers, did a sterling job in accommodating the team. They made a classroom available for the assessments, and Mrs. Thomas contacted all the parents, carefully explaining what the purpose of the research was. This resulted in 49 Afrikaans-speaking children being assessed! Thank you so much for all of your assistance and enthusiasm in supporting us. It was a delight to work with such a great school and lovely children.



Finally, a word of thanks is extended to all the children who participated and their parents

who consented – thank you for reminding us of what matters most - you are the reason why we keep on doing what we love to do! Baie dankie.



The Mullens testing team at Jessie Keet Nursery School in Stellenbosch with principal Felicity Thomas.

This data brings us one step closer in identifying similarities and differences across languages so that we can implement specific language interventions that will have a positive impact on children’s long-term development and functioning. So watch this space – we now have data sets on Afrikaans -, isiZulu-, and Setswana-speaking children. Can you guess who’s next??

Juan Bornman
 Director, Centre for AAC

Book Reading Masters Project

Book reading through support and involvement of caregivers, provides continuous and numerous opportunities for children to acquire new knowledge, learn turn-taking skills, engage in social interaction and to learn about the world around them.

As part of the research for my Masters in AAC, I conducted a brief workshop on providing guidelines on how to read to a child presenting with a severe communication disability and how to adapt storybooks so that these children can be able to easily manipulate them and thus partake in the interaction. The mothers were given books which were partially adapted by Master’s students from the CAAC for Mandela day. The mothers were very excited to learn that lots of easy- to-obtain materials can be used to adapt a book so that their child presenting with restricted physical movement can take part and enjoy the activity. The session took longer than was scheduled as the mothers wanted to try different ideas for adapting the books and looked quite happy with their work. The mothers reported at the end of the session that they did not know their child with a disability could benefit from being read to and will therefore begin to read to the more. A big thank you to the speech therapists and audiologists at Pelonomi hospital for assisting with the project.



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Refilwe Morwane
 Centre for AAC

For your diary...



Notes:
January 2014
<i>PhD Onsite Week 1 : 27-31 January 2014</i>
February 2014
<i>MECI 2 Onsite Week 1: 3-7 February 2014</i>
<i>MAAC 2 Onsite Week 1: 3-7 February 2014</i>
<i>MECI 1 Onsite Week 1: 24-28 February 2014</i>
<i>MAAC 1 Onsite Week 1: 24-28 February 2014</i>
March 2014
<i>Hons AAC 1 Onsite Week: 3-7 March 2014</i>
<i>Hons AAC 2 Onsite Week: 10-14 March 2014</i>