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Centre for AAC
Lay-out and design: Ensa Johnson
Centre for AAC*



**Centre for Augmentative
and Alternative
Communication**

CREATING NEW OPPORTUNITIES

National Newsletter

Great expectations

Can you remember your favourite teacher from school? I would be willing to bet that this teacher had great expectations of you. A teacher's expectations can inspire learners to do more than they thought they could. Research shows that the children of parents who have high expectations of them generally do better at school. Of course, there is a measure to everything, and too much pressure from expectations can be unhelpful or even detrimental to the child.

People with disabilities and their families often struggle to have expectations for themselves or their loved ones with disabilities. It is often hard to know what the person will be like in the future. Well-meaning friends, professionals or other family members may have told the families or the people with disabilities themselves not to have unrealistic expectations. People giving others this message are often concerned that only disillusionment could follow.

However, expectations in themselves are not bad. We can expect people and situations to change – at their own pace. Sometimes the change is not in the person with disabilities, but in those around him or her, as they learn to relook priorities and appreciate things that often fall by the wayside in our busy, performance-driven

lives. I recall the story of Dr Mary Veghese, an Indian doctor who became quadriplegic as a young woman after a road accident. She hoped for healing, but instead, became a world-renown specialist in leprosy and spinal chord rehabilitation. Sometimes expectations realize – in a different way. Are we flexible to adjust them, or is that so hard that we rather prefer to have none at all?

In this issue, you will read about many activities and events of individuals, organizations (Interface and the Centre for AAC) and schools. I am quite certain that many of these will instill renewed hope and increased expectations in people using AAC and their families. Thank you to all the contributors who shared their inspiring stories. May your expectations of good things rise when reading them!

***Kerstin Tönsing
Editor: Centre for AAC***



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)

Interface Branch News

News from KZN

Interface KZN's 2012 year ended with the Communication Circle's outing, and a "bring and share" Christmas braai for the hardworking committee and therapy team. The first quarter of 2013 has come and gone in a whirlwind of activities and happenings at Interface.

Implementation of the Sisizakele Special School Project, which was delayed due to limited funding, finally went ahead in September 2012. During the visit to the school, Jocelyn and Margi provided knowledge and skills training to the teachers with an introductory workshop on AAC, including strategies specifically for learners with ASD, and practical hands-on skill training. Learners who had been identified as having the need for AAC were evaluated and the teachers were provided with intensive input, feedback and detailed recommendations. The week also focused on the development and use of a range of early literacy materials, communication boards, eye gaze frames, communication fans, song and rhyme boards and word and alphabet boards. Copies of all the literacy materials in isiZulu, multiple copies of all the other resources, a dedicated communication device for one child, and various other single message and multi-level communication devices were provided to the school. Subsequent to this initial visit, Interface KZN has been thrilled to have received the balance of funding for this project. The team is currently planning the follow-up visit for June 2013. At that time, thanks to sufficient funding, the team will be able to include an AAC user and caregiver as mentors / trainers and the remainder of the project objectives will be met. Interface KZN would like to sincerely thank our funders for making this project possible.

The Communication Circle's unanimous vote was to visit uShaka Marine World for their first end of year outing on the 28th November. We

were very lucky to have our tickets sponsored by uShaka. The group of 15 was treated to a tour and talk at the Learning Centre and the Dolphin Show. Then it was on to lunch at Wimpy, which was provided to us at no charge! The entire experience was thoroughly enjoyed by the group of teenage AAC users and their communication partners. It was also a lovely opportunity to raise awareness about AAC in a typical social environment.

The communication circle is once again meeting monthly at Interface-KZN. This group aimed at teens and young adults who are AAC users provides an opportunity for socialisation and interaction between peers. Within each session specific goals for each participant are focused on, but the primary goal is for us to make friends and support each other! This year our group is raring to go, everybody has great goals in mind which we will follow up as the year progresses. High on the goal list however is organising more outings and adventures! We look forward to meeting monthly.

If you would like more information or would be interested in attending please contact Trudi Louw on 031 708-4237. We meet on the last Tuesday of each month from 1:00pm until 3:00pm.

At the end of 2012, our workshop / training task team met to schedule workshops for the year ahead. Interface-KZN hosted an introduction to AAC workshop with 29 participants from around the province at RP Moodley School in the first week of February. It is really exciting to see schools sending staff on AAC workshops and great that we can meet and network amongst each other, sharing support and resources. The workshop focused on the



News from KZN (cont.)

basics of AAC with a clear highlight being the presentation by France Mgege on how AAC has changed his life. We look forward to more sharing and learning together as we move through our schedule of workshops for the year. If anyone would like details of our workshops for 2013, please contact Trudi at ifacekzn@saol.com or 031 708-4237.

Stepping Stones school in Pietermaritzburg was visited on the 23rd January, following a request from the school for assistance with assessment of some of their children with potential for AAC. All assessments and training were carried out with Anthea, physiotherapist at the school and two teachers. Five children were assessed using the schools current AAC devices and equipment. Simple classroom strategies that the teachers can start using with the children and how to facilitate this within a group setting were also demonstrated. The staff were highly motivated and very open to learning, and it was therefore recommended that staff and facilitators attend our AAC training modules during 2013. A follow-up visit to assist in setting up an AAC programme was also recommended. As with many of the schools we visit, Stepping Stones is looking more for the "how" with practical demonstrations and practice using the devices as well.

Our newest addition to our resource library is our PC eye unit, which uses eye gaze technology. To date, Avishana, Jocelyn and Pree have received training and Avishana has done a trial session with two of her clients. Interface KZN aims to be able to offer eye control assessments, and demonstrations and training in the use of this device.....This is a very exciting development for us and we will keep everyone posted as training is formalised, so watch this space.....!!!

Felicity Jonck
Chairperson of Interface KZN

School news

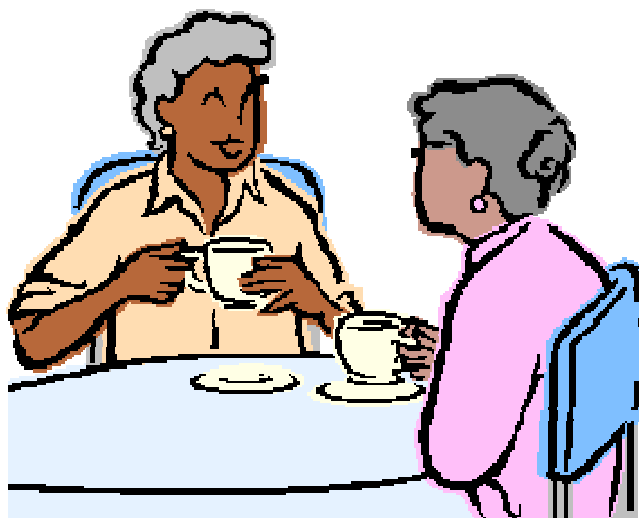
Pathways – Polokwane

Home visits form an integral part of our assessment as well as our support to the whole family at the Mitchell House Enrichment Centre. We visit each of our pupils' homes in our third term and it is always delightful to see our children's reactions when they see their teacher in their home and on their own territory.

The core function of the visit is to simply LISTEN to our parents and caretakers and see if we can be of any assistance in their homes. Daily activities such as seating and positioning, feeding, bathing, etc., are discussed. Augmentative and Alternative Communication options are explored and updated. Schedules are drawn up.

The home visit is an excellent assessment tool and is powerful in building a close bond with our parents and caretakers. This relationship is integral to what we do and the home visit ensures that the link and carry over between home and school is solid.

Sue Altenroxel
Mitchell House Enrichment Centre



Pathways – Pretoria

AAC (Augmentative and Alternative Communication) in Action at Pathways Pretoria

At Pathways Pretoria we use a variety of methods to facilitate communication with our learners. The method used for each learner depends on their level of communication. For those who communicate on a very concrete level, we use real objects. After that, we move on to photos and then we start with more abstract communication methods, such as PCS (Picture Communication Symbols) and finally the written word. In our classrooms, we use all these methods, as well as natural speech, voice output devices and gestures (keyword signing). Using all of the above-mentioned methods (objects, photos, PCS, the written word, devices and gestures) collectively is called 'multi-modal communication'. Multi-modal communication works well because it provides an environment rich in language for each learner.

Object Level

Conner is taking a small book out of the object tray. The book represents Conner's next activity: literacy.



Photo Level

Jani is given a choice between a "happy" and "sad" photo. She uses eye-gaze to indicate her choice and is helped to point at the "happy" face.



PCS Level

Keagan is using a PCS schedule to tell his classmates what activity will take place next. Once the activity is finished, Keagan, or one of his classmates, will put the PCS card into the "finished" box.



The written word

Kagiso chooses and copies letters on his alphabet board. He then makes words with the letters he has chosen.



Devices

It is "Theme Time" and we are learning about earthworms. We ask Tilo what the picture (on the device) is. He presses the device and a recorded voice answers for him, "It is an earthworm". This kind of simple voice output device is a great way to involve non-vocal learners in class activities.



Computers

Our programme includes computer classes where learners engage in basic computer literacy. Here, Kevin is playing an interactive game of hide-and-seek.



Gestures (Keyword signing)

Jade is using keyword signing to say "I LOVE YOU".

*Ina Potgieter
Pathways Pretoria*



CAAC news

Inaugural address by Prof Juan Bornman



From left to right: Prof Stephanie Burton, Vice-Principal of the University of Pretoria, Prof Juan Bornman, Director for the Centre for Augmentative and Alternative Communication and Prof Norman Duncan, Dean of the Faculty of Humanities

Prof Juan Bornman has been working in the field of augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) for 22 years. Her inaugural address delivered on the evening of 21 February, in the Senate Hall, at the University of Pretoria gave her an opportunity to share with academics, fellow researchers, friends and family her deep knowledge of and pertinent insights into crucial issues in the field. Her address was entitled “A systemic perspective on AAC intervention: moving towards evidence-based practice”.

In her talk, she highlighted the centrality of communication to the human existence, and illustrated the plight of those who cannot communicate in conventional ways. She framed her talk within the ever changing landscape of disability, and illustrated how disability, and particularly communication disability can only be understood by viewing a person within the context of the physical, social and cultural environment. She shared how the advancements in the field of AAC have, through the years, provided a lifeline to persons who cannot communicate in conventional ways, and how independence, quality of life and participation in society depend on access to communication.

The full Senate Hall attested to the interest by people from a variety of spheres which Prof

Bornman’s work has attracted over the years. Researchers and academics from a variety of fields, stakeholders in the disability arena, people using AAC, as well as friends and family all left enlightened, uplifted and with much food for thought. Prof Bornman managed to convey not only her in-depth knowledge of the field, but also her passion and commitment to give access to communication to those who are often seen as unable to speak up for themselves. Her address was described as interesting, educational, and thought-provoking, challenging, life changing and eye-opening by various audience members.

Kerstin Tönsing
Centre for AAC

Seminar concludes collaborative project



On the 31st of January and 1st of February 2013, the Centre for AAC hosted a 2-day seminar with researchers from Sweden, the USA and Portugal. The theme of the seminar was “Children with Disability: A focus on Human Rights and Intervention.” Therapists, educators, nurses, parents and academics participated in presentations and group discussions on a variety of topics, such as

- The effects of cancer in children on the children and their families
- Quality in early intervention and inclusive preschool contexts
- The multifaceted management of pain in children undergoing medical treatment
- The rights of children with disabilities in South Africa and other developing countries
- How to assess child participation in everyday situations

Although these presentations were very diverse, they were all framed within the context of the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health – Children and Youth Version (ICF-CY). This classification attempts to describe a child’s participation and development within the context of the child’s abilities and his/her environment.

Leading researchers in the field, such as Dr Rune Simeonsson (North Carolina-Chapel Hill, USA), Prof. Mats Granlund (Jönköping University, Sweden), Prof Juan Bornman (University of Pretoria) and Prof Ana Pinto (University of Porto) shared their knowledge with the audience. .../

This seminar concluded a three-year long collaborative research project between the Centre for AAC, University of Pretoria, and the CHILD (Children, Health, Intervention, Learning, Development) research group at Jönköping University, Sweden. The project was funded by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency and was entitled “ICF-CY: A common language for understanding the multidimensional construct disability in childhood”.

This project gave students and academics from both countries the opportunity to share research, engage in joint projects and produce joint publications, while also getting exposure to policy, practice and research regarding children with disabilities in different countries and contexts.

All presentations from the seminar are available at <http://web.up.ac.za/default.asp?ipkCategoryID=19014&subid=19013&ipklookid=9&parentID=9742>

Kerstin Tönsing
Centre for AAC

Visiting scholar at the Centre for AAC

Dr Susana Castro from the Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences at Porto University in Portugal recently spent some time at the Centre for Augmentative and Alternative Communication. She is currently involved in a cross-cultural early childhood intervention research project with Ms Alecia Samuels from the Centre for AAC, exploring environments in South Africa and Portugal which place children at risk. During her stay, Dr Castro visited two community projects aimed at supporting vulnerable children. Below are her reflections on her experiences and discussions with the director of the Viva Village (Mamelodi), Mrs Melaney Kriel and the cofounder of the Nea Foundation (Danville), Ms Lelanie Steyn (Social Worker and UP Masters in ECI alumna).

“As a visiting scholar from Europe to South Africa, the most striking aspect of this society is the marked contrast in terms of wealth and poverty.

“Visiting communities like Danville or Mamelodi cannot leave us indifferent, and cannot leave us silent, first as citizens, and only after that, as academics. However, it also impresses as seen

The Viva Village in Mamelodi



in the courage, dedication, motivation and kindness of people like Melaney Kriel and Lelanie Steyn who built everything from scratch.

“Melaney Kriel is the courageous founder of the Viva Village project, which, amongst others, brings education, health and general support to the Mamelodi community. Thanks to the work of Melaney and the people of the Viva Village, the shacks of the enormous community of Mamelodi have color. Orphan children living in the dusty streets of Mamelodi know that they can knock on Melaney’s door at Viva Village. Melaney does not seem startled by another orphan appearing at her door, only receives them and supports them as much as she can. Melaney certainly no longer has the expression of surprise on her face that I, coming from Europe, certainly had when seeing a child who is completely alone. But Melaney has the constant notion of rights and dignity that enables her to work actively towards the protection of these children. At the Viva Village, children learn, eat, play, laugh, make friends and they are allowed to be children.

“Lelanie Steyn also works to empower vulnerable women and children in Danville. Thanks to the NEA Foundation, Danville now has several crèches built from scratch, where children are educated and protected and where mothers play an essential role as they are totally involved in the education of their children while also being part of the project themselves. In the crèches at Danville one can see children’s affection towards adults, as adults are seen as a source of support and not a threat. Children with disabilities are understood as part of the community like any other child, and Lelanie works with the mothers so that they can keep supporting their children to achieve inclusion.

“Organizations like this have to exist when governments fail to establish rights to dignity,

.../

education and health of all human beings as a priority. In South Africa, more than in any other place, the role of academia and universities may be fundamental to establish a set of essential supports and resources to these organizations and communities as a priority for their own research endeavors. While universities in countries like Portugal are particularly concerned with developing research evidence on the quality of the services provided to children and vulnerable communities, universities in South Africa may have to establish a research agenda that helps to support access to services for these communities.

“Thus, there are common and distinct aspects regarding the role of universities in the two countries: while in Portugal we focus on ensuring micro and mesosystemic connections with children, families and communities, in South Africa universities should provide evidence on the essential role of human resources and infrastructures to protect children and families, which may have a strong impact on policy development and policy implementation (macrosystemic level). However, both countries struggle (at different levels) with regard to poverty and neglect. Academic partnerships between the two countries may therefore provide strong evidence on systemic factors that can enhance interventions for vulnerable children and diminish poverty rates.”

For more information about the valuable work being undertaken by the Viva Village and the NEA Foundation or how you can become involve, please visit their respective websites.

<http://www.viva-sa.co.za/>

<http://www.neafoundation.co.za/>

Susana Castro, Porto University
Alecia Samuels, Centre for AAC



Thando Crèche in Danville -an ECD facility supported by the NEA foundation

Collaborator at Georgia State University named Distinguished University Professor



The Centre for AAC is very proud to announce that Dr. Rose Sevcik, from Georgia State University (USA) has been named a Distinguished University Professor in recognition of her outstanding records in research, teaching and mentoring students in research.

Dr. Sevcik is one of our collaborators on our project entitled ‘Speech and Language Delays in Children with Neurodevelopmental Disorders in South Africa’. She is a Professor of Psychology at Georgia State University. Dr. Sevcik is a developmental psychologist whose scholarly and research interests center on the development of symbolic processes, specifically oral and written language development. Her research has focused on the language, reading, and communication development of children and youth with, and at risk for, developmental and learning disabilities. Together with Dr MaryAnn Romski, she has conducted ground-breaking research in the field of AAC, including one of the first longitudinal studies on the influence of speech generating device implementation on the speech and language development of youth with little or no functional speech.

Robyn White
Centre for AAC

Update on the Research Project with GSU

The collaborative research project on speech and language delays in children with neurodevelopmental disorders between the Centre for AAC, University of Pretoria and Georgia State University (GSU) had an eventful start to 2013.

The pilot study for the project began in February where 68 typically-developing children were tested to assess the appropriateness of the translated Mullen Scales of Early Learning. The Mullen Scales of Early Learning have been translated into South African English, Afrikaans, isiZulu and Setswana.

We were really impressed with the preschools visited – the children were happy, interactive and alert. We would like to sincerely thank the speech therapists at Dr. George Mukhari Hospital and all the teachers of the ASHA Association in Soweto for their assistance and continued support in this project. It was such an honor working with all the teachers, speech therapists and children.

Prof. Juan Bornman, Prof. Kitty Uys and Robyn White will be presenting the results of the pilot study at the 11th International SONA Conference in Morocco in June.

We would also like to thank the sponsors, the National Institute of Health, USA, as well as the project leaders from Georgia State University, Dr. MaryAnn Ronski and Dr. Rose Sevcik for their continued support in this project.

Robyn White
Centre for AAC



Staff matters

Goodbye Dr Dana Donohue!



I clearly remember the excitement in January 2011 as we were waiting for Dr Dana Donohue, the first Post Doctoral fellow in the Centre to join us! We knew her on paper in as much as her CV revealed, and knew that her knowledge and skill would be a huge asset to our staff and

students. But we soon discovered that there were much more facets to her which were only revealed over the course of the two years that she was with us.

Initially we often reminisced about the English language and how Americans would interpret a sentence like “*He was selling rocket at the robot from his boot*” and that “*just now*” could mean in the next few minutes or sometime today. We delighted at the food differences and introducing her to melktert, koeksisters and beskuit. We discovered how passionate she was about cats, and how deep the stories of all of the persons who use AAC touched her. We stood amazed when she took out her pink “Powderpuff” computer and calculated effect sizes and Cronbach’s and complex regressions.... Her SPSS skills will remain the talk of the Centre for a long time to come! But even more amazing, was the patient and skillful way in which she assisted students to understand and apply complex statistical measurements to their studies. Now, when we walk past her office and where she used to sit, earplugs in her ears so that she could focus and concentrate, there is a hole in the Centre...

Due to the high quality of her research and the fact that her areas of research interest are similar to those of the Centre for AAC, Dana was successful in securing a 5-year appointment (2013 – 2017) as a Research Fellow at the University of Pretoria. However, due to the long distance between South Africa and the US and family responsibility in the US, she decided not to pursue her academic career abroad, and to return to the US.

Thank you for sharing two years of your post-PhD life with us, Dana. As they say in the classics: *"It's been an incredible ride. Mission accomplished."* With that, we all bid you farewell. We won't forget you and the time that you spent at the Centre and we will treasure the memories of your time with us.

Juan Bornman
Centre for AAC

Reflecting on my time in South Africa

Over two years ago, I first arrived in South Africa, tired and jet-lagged from the 16 hour flight from the United States. It was the beginning of February 2011 (winter in the northern hemisphere) and I had just flew out of a major ice storm in Atlanta, Georgia to arrive in Johannesburg in the midst of summer. I must have looked odd leaving the airport in my thick coat, jeans, and boots.

When I first arrived, I was in culture shock: a country with eleven official languages! Even when conversing in English, I quickly learned that the meanings of our words sometimes differed (e.g., the boot is the back of a South African car, while it is footwear in the United States) and that we used different words to mean the same thing (e.g., tekkies vs. sneakers). I also had never experienced "tea parties" before...in the United States we just take coffee breaks.

At the Centre for AAC, my colleagues helped me adjust to my new surroundings. I began to work on several new projects, including one that assessed the human rights of children with disabilities in South Africa. When we went to work in various special schools in South Africa, I was struck by how welcoming the principals, teachers, and staff of the various schools were. It made me realize how much all of these adults cared for and invested in the children with whom they worked. The children were especially lovely; they would ask me where I was from (I think my American accent and mannerisms indicated I was not from around here) and how I liked living in their country.

After two years, leaving South Africa was difficult; it had become my new home, but it was time for me to return to my friends and family here in the

United States. I take with me many warm memories of my time in South Africa. One day – if I am lucky enough – I will have the opportunity to visit again.

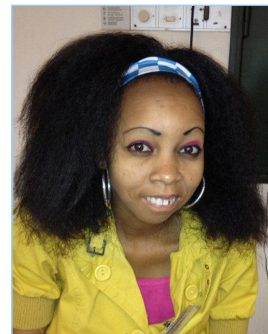
Dana Donohue
Previously Centre for AAC

New kid on the block

Some call me sweet , some say diva and some say fashionable... But at the end of the day, I am me.

Hey there!!!

I feel like have been put on the wrong train when I write this intro about myself. But I won't be much of a drama queen, I am just going be ME. Well here goes...



I am Constance Gugu Ntuli from Mamelodi East, the beautiful youngest daughter of Mr and Mrs Mahlabane. I am the shy, sweetest and fashionable one in the family. I believe that you only live once but it is up to you that at the end of each day how much you want to achieve, and how you go about to make a positive change in someone else life. I lost my speech at the age of 11 years but that has not stopped my hopes and dreams. In fact, now I am part of this great project called FOFA. It is a Sotho word meaning to SOAR, to spread your wings. It has taught new things in life and how to be more independent and to believe in myself. Now all I do is aim high to achieve more in life and to teach other people more about being a person living with a physical challenge. I started using an iPod touch as a device which was loaded with a special software called Proloque2go and it has made my life and communicating with people a whole of easier. Now I am working at the Centre of AAC.

I am the young and new face of the Centre of AAC, now not only as a FOFA participant, but as an employee. So far I am enjoying and loving my part-time job here at the Centre for Augmentative and Alternative Communication. Working here with a bunch of happy colleagues is a wonderful thing and is making work fun. So now you do not have any excuse for not wanting to learn more about how to treat a person who does not have speech or how to improve their life. So just call or visit our Centre - we will be happy to assist you.

Constance Ntuli
Centre for AAC

Student news

Congratulations Dr Kerstin Tönsing!

*Sincere congratulations are the order of the day...
for you have excelled yourself in the most special way
May your PhD be just the start of special joys for you
And may the future bring everything you dream it to!*



Recently, we had a red letter day at the Centre as one of our staff members, Kerstin Tönsing wore her red toga... which means that she was awarded her PhD at the Autumn Graduation ceremony. So from hence forward she will now be known as **Dr Kerstin Tönsing!**

During the past five years she dreamt of nothing else but her PhD, she read nothing but peer reviewed, ISI accredited journal articles, she believed (and so did her supervisors, colleagues, family and friends) that she would do it, she worked from dusk to dawn without ever stopping to take a break, and then she achieved great success! Eventually the day came when she could hand in her thesis for examination, then the day came when the examiners sent in their reports and accepted her thesis, and then the day came on which she had to defend her thesis during an oral exam. And what a splendid job she did! The external examiners (from Trinity College in Ireland and the University of Virginia in the US) congratulated her on the depth of her theoretical reasoning and argumentation and the careful way in which she drew inferences and highlighted her results, and her friends and family applauded her for her perseverance. She was also awarded with the prestigious **Semantic Compaction Systems Award** for the best research project on a Masters or PhD level completed during 2012. Although the books of education were bitter at times, the fruits are always sweet – and how you deserve the

fruits Dr Tönsing!

So from all of us who know you, congratulations Kerstin! You are an inspiration to us! But remember, in the wise words of Prof Lyle Lloyd, a PhD is not the end, it's just the beginning of a beautiful academic career that lies ahead of you! Congratulations once again. We are all eagerly watching to see how these fruits continue to grow and develop!

Prof Juan Bornman
Centre for AAC

Graduandi

April was graduation month at the Centre for AAC. Staff members were very proud as they saw many of their students being capped in recognition of the completion of their studies. Seventeen students graduated from the Master's in ECI, while six students received their Master's in AAC. We are so proud of all of you, and are confident that you will implement your skills and knowledge to continue making a difference in the lives of families of children at risk/with disabilities and/or people who need AAC.

Twenty students graduated with their Honours in AAC, and are now ready to implement some AAC strategies at schools, practices or in the home. Fay Bjornstad, principal of Pathways Roo-depoort Stimulation Centre for Children with Severe Disabilities, received the **Dynavox Mayer-Johnson Award** for the best achievement of an honours student in AAC. Fay is also a dedicated practitioner and leader in using AAC to improve communication in children with severe challenges. We are very proud of you, Fay!



Ensa Johnson with Fay Bjornstad who received the Dynavox Mayer-Johnson Award

On the 9th of April, 145 students also graduated with their Advanced Certificate in Education: Severe Disabilities. We trust that this will be the start of great things for them too.



Some proud ACE graduandi

Onsite weeks for BA Hons (AAC) students

The month of March was quite an eventful one at the Centre for AAC with the contact weeks of the first year and second year BA Hons students on 4-8 March and 11-15 March respectively. Two delegates from the Ministry of Education in Botswana, Ms D. Molosiwa and Ms J. Masongo also joined the two student groups to obtain more information on augmentative and alternative communication.

Thirty three new students from all over the country and even one from the Arabic Emirates as well as the two delegates from Botswana attended the first years' contact week. They were introduced to the field of AAC, including symbol systems; AAC assessment; early intervention and AAC devices. The last day was a practical day where the students could implement the theory that they learnt throughout the week practically in a case study. The students indicated that it was a fruitful week where they not only gained a lot of new knowledge on the topic of AAC but also made new friendships.

During their contact session, 25 second-year students, together with the Botswana delegates learnt more about AAC intervention; employment for people with disabilities and the law and people with disabilities. The last two days were spent on research methodology. The attendees agreed that the group work and involvement of the students during lectures enhanced their understanding of the work.

We are looking forward to supporting these students in their academic journey and wish all of them all the best with their studies.

Ensa Johnson
Centre for AAC

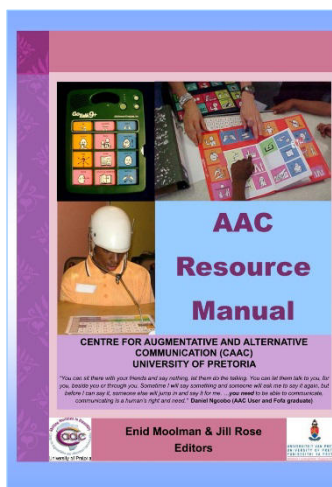


The Iron lady

No, we are not referring to Margaret Thatcher – the Centre for AAC has its own 'iron lady'! Christine van der Merwe, a student in the final year of her Master's in AAC, completed the 'iron man' competition on the 14th of April in Port Elizabeth. The highlight of the race—she crossed the finish line together with her dad! Congratulations on this great achievement, Christine. And, as a healthy body hosts a healthy and fit mind, we are sure your studies will soon be completed with the same dedication and excellence!



AAC Resource Manual: Addendum 2012

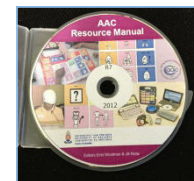


The AAC Resource Manual with 2012 updates is available from the Centre for AAC. This is an electronic collection of 'tip and tricks' relating to AAC implementation compiled by a variety of experts in the field. Topics include:

- Screening and assessment of a potential AAC candidate
- The use of AAC strategies in various set-

tings

- Various AAC tools and intervention strategies
 - Communication books and boards
 - In the classroom (literacy, numeracy, story-books etc.)
 - Let us play
 - Access
- ...and much more.



The manual is available on CD at R 250.00. Price includes postage and handling. For more information please contact our office at saak@up.ac.za or phone (012) 420 2001.

Enid Moolman
Centre for AAC

Let's get practical

“Hospital book” reduces children’s hospital anxiety

“No Mommy, I’m not going to hospital!” These words of my 4-year-old daughter replayed in my mind as I sat in a seminar on the rights of children with disability presented at the CAAC. One of the Swedish presenters, Dr. Stefan Nilson presented his research regarding the management of pain in children. As a paediatric nurse, Dr. Nilson described various non-pharmacological tactics that could be employed to reduce children’s perception of pain. Having my daughter booked for a tonsillectomy the week following his presentation, I was particularly interested when he explained that when children are adequately prepared for a hospital visit/procedure, it significantly reduces their anxiety and stress. This, in turn, leads to a reduced pain response. (Hopefully also in this case to less tears and better compliance with doctors’ orders!)

The method used by Dr. Nilson in his study to prepare children for their hospital visit was to use a “hospital book”. This book shows step-by-step, in Picture Communication Symbols (PCS) what will happen during the visit. As the pictures are attached with Velcro which allows the child to take a picture off as soon as the event has occurred.

I made a similar book for my daughter, showing step-by-step what could be expected on the day of the dreaded hospital visit. I also added in the front of the book a “count down” to the day, which started three days before the visit. She was allowed to take off a symbol and place it into the envelope at the bottom of the page once a day.



This enabled her to know exactly when to expect the visit. We talked through the steps in the book countless times, with her removing and replacing the PCS until she knew it off by heart. This also provided her with the context to ask questions – often over and over again.

On the actual day, I am happy to report, she calmly endured all the steps we discussed and placed the PCS in the envelope at the back of the book one by one. She really enjoyed predicting what would happen next. The actual procedure was a success and we had absolutely NO crying



during the whole day ! Hospital staff commented on her calmness and composure, which – I am convinced – stemmed from her being so well prepared.

I would really encourage any parent/therapist of a child that has to go to hospital to invest the time in making a similar book. Although my daughter does not have communication difficulties, I am convinced that such a book could be used with much success with people with communication and/or cognitive impairments. Obviously, it should be adapted according to the needs and specific circumstances of the individual.

For Dr. Nilson’s complete presentation, please go to <http://web.up.ac.za/sitefiles/file/46/9742/RESEARCH%20SEMINAR%202013/Children,%20pain%20and%20the%20ICF.pdf> on the CAAC’s website. All the best with that hospital visit!

Karin van Niekerk
Centre for AAC

User forum

Nehal's story

Our Angel was born in April 2004. Nehal is our first born. It has been an extraordinary journey.

Her gifts to us have been unconditional love for all and self-analysis for us daily. The quote that comes to mind is "The teacher you need is the person you living with" by Byron Katie. When you have a child with special needs, priorities in life change from material to more simple joys in life.

Nehal is an intelligent, vocal, and head strong amazing girl. She has limited use of her hands and legs. As she gets older, we have battled to understand her vocal sounds. She manages to say a few words, like ya, no (her favorite word), go, mamam (food), dudu (milk). But as her needs and her moods are becoming more complex, her frustrations grow, until she cries, endlessly. Communication was the key.

On a visit to the annual Disability fair, we were given the name of the Centre for AAC in Pretoria. After chatting to the teachers, speech therapist and physiotherapist we booked an appointment. We had to fill in a detailed questionnaire and arrange for all the people in contact with Nehal to attend the AAC consultation.

I was not sure what to expect as we drove in to University of Pretoria. It was a group session, teacher, speech therapist and physiotherapist, as well as three AAC specialists from the centre. They gave us options available and tested Nehal capabilities. Nehal loved the eye tracker the best. It took her 5 exciting minutes and she started using the eye tracker. It was an emotional moment when for the first time she could use a computer and express herself and make things happen by herself independently.

The AAC system could help her and tell us what food she wants, what she wants to do, what she is feeling, where it is paining, itching. Simple things for sure, but key essential things for Nehal and her caregivers. I am confident AAC will transform her life, like a candle light transforms darkness. A new world awaits. Nehal is ready.

Kalpana Parbhoo
Mother of Nehal



A special gift for a special girl

The Centre for AAC felt honored to be part of a recent generous act that enabled a little girl with cerebral palsy to obtain her own personal communication device. Nehal and her family came for a consultation at the Centre for AAC last year October. Nehal, who has dystonic cerebral palsy, was assessed by our AAC Team and the outcome of the assessment was that Nehal had an abundant desire to communicate but was in need of her own personal communication device.

The news of Nehal's much needed communication device spread and quite amazingly, within a few months, a generous and kind donor had donated a large amount of funds to Nehal so that she may acquire the appropriate and best suited device for her communication needs.

A meeting was arranged with Nehal's parents, the CAAC Team and the Director of Inclusive Solutions, Lisa Ellis, and they are in the process of obtaining the perfect communication device for Nehal! The Centre for AAC is honored to be a part of this story as it shows that one person's generous act of kindness will give Nehal the greatest gift – a voice of her own!

Robyn White
Centre for AAC



The FOFA

VOICE



Interface Newsletter Edition

This column features regular contributions of the FOFA empowerment project participants. These young adults who use AAC all have a passion for writing and sharing their ideas on a variety of topics. Being able to write and reach an audience through a newsletter is one way to break the silence!

GROW OLD WITH ME, BE MY SWEET VALENTINE

February was the month of LOVE... It's pretty amazing what people do for the ones they love or what they go through just to show them how much they mean to them. I know most of you feel that love like that must be shared and shown everyday, and not just on valentine's day. But think of it this way: On your birthday you also celebrate your life in a special way. Why not celebrate love on a special day too? I just gave you a perfect answer of why people go all out on this day. It's all about LOVE, LOVE AND oh yes LOVE, don't you just love it.

Does the theme of valentine still exist though? You know, the red and white theme. I remember at school we all had to wear red and white on the day. It was great just having everyone look the same. We had a little market day where everyone sold things that expressed the feeling of love.

Then there was a valentine box where you wrote to your friend, a crush or anyone at school you felt like sharing your love with, then names would be called out at the hall and you would get your letter. It was a cupid idea for kids at school and so much fun.

Then you find people who claim that they do not celebrate valentine's day. For what reason you ask.... LAUGH OUT LOUD you will hear a lot of funny answers,

I tell you! They are just in denial or single, so they console themselves by saying it is a waste of time going all out just for one silly day, but if you are truly in love or like sharing it, hey, why not do it! Join the young, wild and free, it does not matter how old you are when it comes to love.



Real love is not based on romance, candle light dinners and walks along the beach. In fact, it is based on respect, compromise, care and trust.

A few quotes by famous writers:



*"Grow old with me, the best is yet to come."
- by Robert Browning*

*"If I know what love is, it is because of you."
-by Herman Hesse*

"Love looks not with the eyes, but with the mind, and therefore is winged Cupid painted blind."

-by William Shakespeare



For your diary...



Exhibition of assistive devices at New Hope School, Cecilia Road, Ashlea Gardens, Pretoria. Open to the public from 10h00 to 18h00. Various companies will be displaying a wide range of products, including mobility equipment, lifting equipment, adapted utensils, adaptations for vehicles, communication devices and computer adaptations Contact: Ansophai Jordaan 012 460 2234 x 108 or 082 9221377, or ansophai.jordaan@gmail.com New Hope School, Pretoria

Workshop: Empathetic Communication in Dementia Care

This workshop, presented by Michael Verde, will give caregivers and organizations of care strategies to 'reach' people with dementia and enable them to participate in emotionally meaningful relationships. Michael Verde is the founder of 'Memory Bridge', a US-based foundation that aims to connect people with dementia and their families, and reveal the competence of people with dementia.

**Heads-up for Workshop
Creative Ability: Practical Implementation in the Classroom**

Prof Kitty Uys and Karin van Niekerk from the Centre for AAC will share how service providers can determine the level of creative ability of children and plan appropriate activities and intervention strategies. An announcement of the date and time will be sent via the email list.



Notes:	
MAY	
07 May :	10h00 – 18h00 Exhibition of assistive devices at New Hope School
22 May:	Workshop: Early Communication Intervention. This 2-hour afternoon workshop will be presented by Andrea Barton-Hulsey, Speech language pathologist from Georgia State University. Details will be sent out soon.
28 May:	Workshop: Empathetic Communication in Dementia Care
OCTOBER	
3-4 October:	Workshop: AAC in the Hospital Setting

Workshop: AAC in the Hospital Setting

John Costello from the Boston Children's Hospital, USA, will share from his vast experience in implementing AAC strategies for children and adults with temporary or long-term communication problems in the hospital setting. John is a speech-language pathologist and the director of the augmentative communication program at Boston Children's Hospital.

**Heads-up for Workshop
Life Skills for Independence: AAC for Success**

Prof Kitty Uys and Karin van Niekerk from the Centre for AAC will share practical AAC strategies to facilitate life skills and independence in a variety of settings (school, employment setting, home...). An announcement of the date and time will be sent via the email list.