

NEWSLETTER



Australian Association of Special Education Inc. | WA Chapter

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President's Comment

Dear AASE members,

I hope that the term has gone well, and that you have gotten to know your students and their needs.

There have been a number of interesting reports released around students with special needs in schools. Adding to these is the latest report from the Australian Senate in regards to how students with disabilities access schooling and their level of academic attainment and how this is measured. AASE National Council have developed a response to the report, supporting the key recommendations made, particularly those that concern the ongoing supports and professional learning required by teachers and school support staff, the monitoring of student progress and outcomes, and the implementation of appropriate funding as recommended in the Gonski Review. It was also noted that these enquiries often do not fully acknowledge the significant progress that has been made in schools towards enhancing educational outcomes for students with disabilities, and that there was a great deal of anecdotal evidence that was not included in the report regarding the good work that schools are doing. We would like to acknowledge that work here.

Thank you to Maureen Lorimer for the information about ABLEWA, a curriculum designed for students with significant disabilities who are working at a pre-intentional or intentional engagement level. Please see the SCSA website for further information. Thank you also to Rachael Jones who will be compiling our newsletters (I have handed this task on-phew), which as you can see has a snazzy new look.

I wish you a lovely rest over the break and hope you come back refreshed and eager to engage your students in their learning.

Regards, Di Chambers



Feedback from the AASE Term 4 PD (2015) on AAC devices

Thanks to Kelly Savage from the Independent Living Centre WA for presenting at our Term 4 PD on AAC devices. Here were some of the take-home messages:

- See the potential in AAC; make the least dangerous assumption; assume the person understands what you say.
- Connect. Mirenda & Beukelman (1992) recommend using AAC in natural contexts.
- Notice and create opportunities to use the AAC.
- Embed communication in lessons. Plan and script; know where to find vocabulary on the AAC device beforehand.
- Build language on AAC. Start with the most common words.
- DO use the AAC yourself, set high expectations, use comprehensive vocabulary, use wait time.
- DON'T expect the user to learn without modelling, demand pre-requisite skills, limit vocabulary to a few choices, do all the talking.

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Australian Association of Special Education WA Chapter

Abilities Based Learning Education, WA (ABLEWA)

Maureen Lorimer, ABLEWA Principal Consultant

The School Curriculum and Standards Authority was aware that in 2007 the Victorian Department of Education and Training partnered in a research project with the University of Melbourne and worked with almost 700 teachers across 77 Victorian government schools to develop Abilities Based Learning and Education (ABLES) support resources. Given the strong evidence-based research that underpinned the development of ABLES and the strong support for it by key disability education stakeholders in Western Australia, late in 2014, the Authority negotiated with the Department of Education, Victoria and the University of Melbourne to procure the use of the ABLES curriculum, assessment tool and online professional learning modules to undertake a trial within Western Australia. The Authority badged these as Abilities Based Learning Education Western Australia (ABLEWA).

An ABLEWA Advisory Committee was established in December 2014 to advise the Authority on matters related to the implementation of ABLEWA in Western Australian schools. The ABLEWA Advisory Committee consists of representatives, with expertise in education for students with disability, from the Department of Education, Western Australia, Catholic Education WA and the Association of Independent Schools of Western Australia.

A small validation trial was undertaken by the Authority in Semester 1, 2015 with 16 public, Catholic and independent schools and in Semester 2, 2015 a broader trial with 112 public, Catholic and independent schools, selected via Expression of Interest, commenced.


Participation in the Validation Trial Schools Group enabled schools to have access to the ABLES curriculum and assessment tool, and in return, provide critical advice and

feedback to the Authority with regards the validity of curriculum content and the assessment tool. In addition, the Semester 2 trial focus was for participants to provide the Authority with feedback on the effectiveness of the ABLES online professional learning modules in assisting them to use the ABLES curriculum and assessment tool. Feedback from both trials was extremely positive and as a result in 2016 the ABLEWA curriculum for English, History, Mathematics and Science was integrated into the Western Australian Curriculum and Assessment Outline as Stages A to D. Curriculum for Geography, Health and Physical Education, Technologies and The Arts will be added by the end of Term 1, 2016.

Teachers will find the curriculum on the Authority's website. Go to the P-10 curriculum and choose a learning area. Within the Overview section can be found an ABLEWA Scope and Sequence for the chosen learning area. For curriculum content go to:

Jump to year: P 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 ABLEWA: A B C D

found at the top of the page and also on the left hand side of the page under Filters.

Simply click on the required stage and choose either   to select your view.

The ABLEWA curriculum focuses on progressing students from a pre-intentional to intentional engagement in learning. They support students to develop their independence as they explore, participate and engage in the world around them. As students' progress through these stages, the amount of support decreases as they proceed towards becoming independent learners.

ABLEWA will also provide assessment and reporting resources and professional learning modules to assist teachers in recognising and responding to the diverse learning needs of all students, and in assessing and reporting student learning, monitoring student progress and providing accurate intervention advice. It is anticipated that these resources will be available through the Authority's website during Term 2, 2016. Updates will be provided via the K-10 e-circular.

The benefits for students, teachers and parents has been evident, particularly in the trial schools that have used the comprehensive reports to analyse student progress and use as a basis for future planning. Parents also are able to see the performance level of their child and the progress they make over time.

Thank you to Val McKelvey

Val McKelvey has been a long standing member of AASE (WA) having been a member since 1996. During this time she has been actively committed to the WA Chapter and has held several positions including State President and Vice President, and National Vice President.

Val has an extensive knowledge of AASE at a state and national level and works tirelessly to ensure that the WA Chapter runs to benefit members and the wider special education community. Val has been the driving force behind many initiatives in the AASE WA chapter, including provision of



numerous grants and awards to the WA special education community. She has been an ongoing National Councillor, representing WA at the National level and providing AASE (WA) with relevant and current information on National initiatives. Val's enthusiasm, hard work and generous mentoring of other AASE committee members is to be commended.

Val has recently moved to Melbourne to be closer to family (including a new granddaughter) and is sorely missed by all AASE (WA) committee members and staff at Catholic Education (WA) where she was a consultant for students with special needs. She has had to leave the WA Chapter to defect to the Victorians, but will be fondly and often remembered. A position is here for her, should she return.

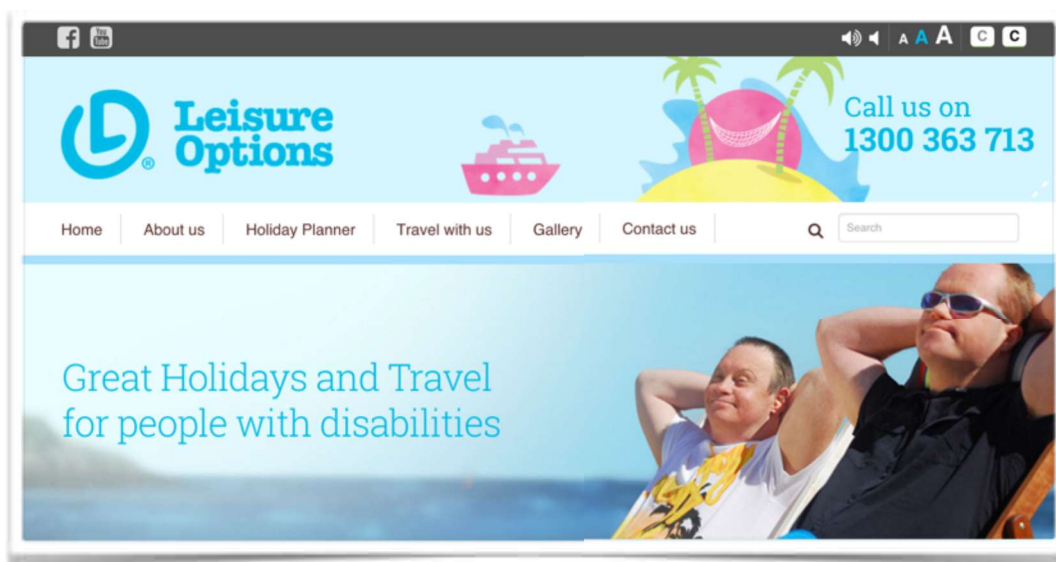
Of Interest | Travel for people with disabilities

By Rachael Jones

A common theme that arises in my students' person-centred planning meetings is the dream to travel overseas. One student dreams of Hollywood, another can't wait to explore Disneyland.

I turned to Google and began researching travel options for people with special needs. That's when I stumbled across *Leisure Options*, which I would describe as Contiki for people with disabilities.

Leisure Options is an accredited tourism company which provides hassle-free domestic and international holidays for people with physical and intellectual disabilities. There is the option to travel in a group or individually with support ratios ranging from 1:1 support to 1:4. There are some incredible itineraries in the brochures online, including Hollywood and African Safari. The website is disability-friendly (i.e. includes a screen reader, text zoom, and high-contrast option) and is easy to navigate. Go to www.leisureoptions.com.au and start turning those big dreams of adventure into realities!



Access to real learning: The impact of policy, funding, and culture on students with disability

Senate Report Summary

In January 2016 the Senate released a report which examined current levels of access and attainment for students with disability in the school system. The report suggests that the Australian school system is failing children with a disability. These children experience unacceptable levels of discrimination and are routinely refused enrolment, bullied and abused. The inquiry recommends the development of a national strategy to improve the education of students with disability. Ten recommendations were made. A summary of these (see full report for extended versions) are provided:

Recommendation 1

The committee recommends that the government commits to funding schools on the basis of need, according to the Gonski Review.

Recommendation 2

The committee recommends that the government fund all students with disability on the basis of need by reversing its cuts to final two years of the Gonski Reforms.

Recommendation 3

The committee recommends that the government heeds the warnings of witnesses that linking school funding to the Consumer Price Index will result in funding cuts in real terms and reduce access to education for students with disability.

Recommendation 4

The committee recommends that the government keeps its commitment to use the Nationally Consistent Collection of Data on School Students with Disability to deliver more funding for students with disability based on their individual needs in 2016.

Recommendation 5

The committee recommends that the government release the results of the Nationally Consistent Collection of Data on School Students with Disability for 2015, and previous years, as a matter of urgency.

Recommendation 6

The committee recommends that a dedicated Disability Discrimination Commissioner be reinstated to the Australian Human Rights Commission.

Recommendation 7

The Committee recommend that the government works with states, territories and school systems to:

- (a) Establish a national approach to

ending the bullying of students with disability, (b) Make it mandatory for all initial teacher education courses to ensure beginning teachers enter the classroom with best-practice skills in the inclusion of students with disability, (c)

"Make it mandatory for all initial teacher education courses to ensure beginning teachers enter the classroom with best-practice skills in the inclusion of students with disability"

Investigate the establishment a national qualification standard for teacher aids and assistants to ensure they have the knowledge and skills required to support learning for all students, (d) Prioritise the development of a national approach to modifying the curriculum for students with disability, (e) Better support school systems, teachers and principals to continually improve the accuracy and effectiveness of the Nationally Consistent Collection of Data on School Students with Disability program.

Recommendation 8

In light of the limitations of the evidence presented, the committee recommends the government work with states and territories to establish a process for the collection and publication of information about levels of access and attainment for students with disability.

Recommendation 9

The committee recommends the government work with states, territories, experts, stakeholders, school systems, parents and students to establish a national strategy to improve the education of students with disability.

Recommendation 10

The committee recommends the government works with states and territories to end restrictive practices in schools, consistent with the recommendations of the 2015 Senate Inquiry into violence, abuse and neglect against people with disability in institutional and residential settings, including the gender and age related dimensions, and the particular situation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disability, and culturally and linguistically diverse people with disability.

The full report can be accessed at:

http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate/Education_and_Employment/students_with_disability/Report

Join us at the

AASE WA Chapter Meetings

Dates: April 6, May 11, June 29

Time: 5pm

Venue: Catholic Education Office
50 Ruislip St, Rm G2

RSVP: Dianne - President

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Tech Review | The PIP for stress management

By Rachael Jones



The Pip is a new piece of technology that claims to teach you how to manage your stress better. It is currently being used by a range of professionals, including therapists and sports coaches. Here I describe how it works and share my thoughts on its use within the special education context.

The Pip measures the body's response to stress by measuring Electrodermal Activity (EDA), that is, changes in the skin's ability to conduct an electrical current. Paired with a companion app, such as *The Loom*, users can use the Pip to monitor and possibly modify their stress levels.

First, you launch a companion app (e.g. *The Loom* or *Relax & Race*) and log into your Pip account. In my opinion, this is the most frustrating aspect of the Pip because; a) the app insists you sign up with a long and complex password including capitals, numbers, and special characters, and b) you are required to sign in every time. Signing-in with a complex password is not very helpful when you are in a hurry to use the Pip for stress-management (e.g. when a child's behaviour is escalating quickly).

Once you've signed into your account (or a student's

account), you can start a new "session". The sessions are what I would describe as "calming activities". In *The Loom*, for example, there is an activity in which you must change a winter scene into summer (if you're not impressed by the Pip, you'll almost certainly appreciate the stunning graphics).

As you calm your mind, the snow starts to melt and the grass starts to appear. The calmer you remain, the better you progress (in this case, the quicker winter morphs into summer).

I've tried using the Pip as a calming strategy for my Year 11 and 12 students with Autism

Spectrum Disorder. In one instance, a student was asked to try a new task. He became agitated, pushed the desk back and crossed his arms. I introduced him to the Pip and started a new session. I explained

that if he calmed down, the winter scene would turn into summer. For 10 minutes he remained still and silent as he tried to figure out how to change the scenery with his mind alone.





At the end of the session, I asked him how he felt. He replied "I feel good". For the rest of the lesson he worked quietly and independently.



At the end of a "Pip session", you are given a score and the opportunity to add a note. Pip stats may be helpful in monitoring a student's behaviour over time and notes can be used to record observed behaviours before and after a session.

If I had one criticism it would be this; whilst the app visually represents stress levels (i.e. EDA), it does not necessarily teach practical strategies (e.g. breathing techniques or muscle relaxation) to help you achieve the desired state of calm. The user is expected to intrinsically "know" how to relax or at least expected

to figure it out. This can be a good thing, however, students with emotional-regulation issues may require explicit instruction.

I've only used the Pip in my classroom for a short time, however, so far it's been useful in diffusing escalating behaviour. Will the novelty wear off over time? The Pip retails for \$249 and comes in 2 colours, Arctic White and Onyx Black.

Find out more information about the science behind the Pip at <https://thepip.com/en-au/>



Useful Apps | Conversation Skills



ConversationBuilder™

By Mobile Education Store LLC
\$30.99

Learn how to have a multi-exchange conversation in a variety of social settings. Know when it is appropriate to introduce yourself, ask questions, make observations and change the subject of the conversation.



Conversation Social Stories & Simple PECS

By Touch Autism
\$5.99

Conversation social stories is made up of four social stories about different conversational skills and simple communication tools to go with them. The stories focus on greetings, asking someone to play, what to talk about and tips for great conversations.



Conversation Shaker

By Jaladi Corp
Free

Conversation Shaker provides interesting topics/ice breakers based on different situations. Shake the iPhone to see the next conversation starter.

AASE WA Executive and Committee

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