Conductive Education and Collaborative Partnerships to Support the Learner

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Carson Street School

expert staff | exceptional programs

Learning Objectives:

- I aim to highlight the collaborative working partnerships we have formed at Carson Street School in order to support our learners and will challenge the audience to review their own collaborative practices.
- I will offer the audience some insight into how to form those collaborative partnerships in order to meet the needs of the student.
- My presentation will be based upon a special education primary school setting and will focus on the marrying of the principals and philosophy of a specialist programme, Conductive Education, with that of the many external agencies that we work collaboratively with.

Overview:

Carson Street School caters to students from birth to 12 years.

- We currently have 91 students who access the specialist programmes we provide.
- There are two cohorts of students; those with a predominately physical disability and those with a cognitive impairment.
- This presentation will focus on students with physical impairments who access the Conductive Education Programme.

Introduction:

- Disabilities, in particular motor impairments, do not only affect one's motor skills, they impact on the whole person and their family.
- It often impedes their ability to explore and interact with their environment independently and spontaneously.
- It is therefore vital that their needs are approached holistically, as motor disability affects all areas of development and learning.
- At Carson Street School we do this through the Conductive Education (CE) Programme.

What is Conductive Education?

- Conductive Education (CE) is a unique, holistic educational approach to teaching those with motor disabilities.
- The primary goal of CE is to develop the child's personality - an "orthofunctional personality". That is, to teach the child the ability to cope, to adapt to new situations and to be spontaneous.
- This is underpinned by the belief that all children can learn if taught appropriately. CE sees motor disorders as a problem of learning requiring education, rather than a medical condition requiring treatment.
- CE focuses on the establishment of inclusive education from the earliest age possible.

- The belief within CE is …
  - ***Everyone*** can learn
  - Human differences are ***normal***
  - Inclusion and participation are ***essential*** to human development
  - Learning must be suited to the needs of the individual
  - Rhythmical Intention links thought, language & movement
  - Development of an orthofunctional personality
  - Development of '**can do**' attitude

"One must respect both the differences and the dignity of all human beings"

Ildiko Kozma (1997) The Development of the Peto System

An Orthofunctional Person has:

"..... a general capacity for adaptation or learning
which enables him throughout life to adjust
more and more comprehensively to his natural
and social environment and on that general capacity
his lifelong learning depends"

Hári & Ákos (1988: 141)

Features of a Conductive Education classroom:

- The ***group*** and its ***dynamics*** provide a motivating and supportive learning environment where students learn from and alongside peers.
- The ***integrated programme/daily routine*** is structured to meet each child's needs within the group.
- ***Rhythmic Intention*** is a strategy used whereby speech, language and song assist children to learn to regulate movement.
- The ***Task Series*** is a teaching tool used in Conductive Education. It provides the framework for delivering a balanced curriculum.

What is Collaboration?

collaboration:

'the action of working with someone to produce something'

synonyms: cooperation, alliance, partnership, participation, combination, association, concert; team work, joint effort, working together

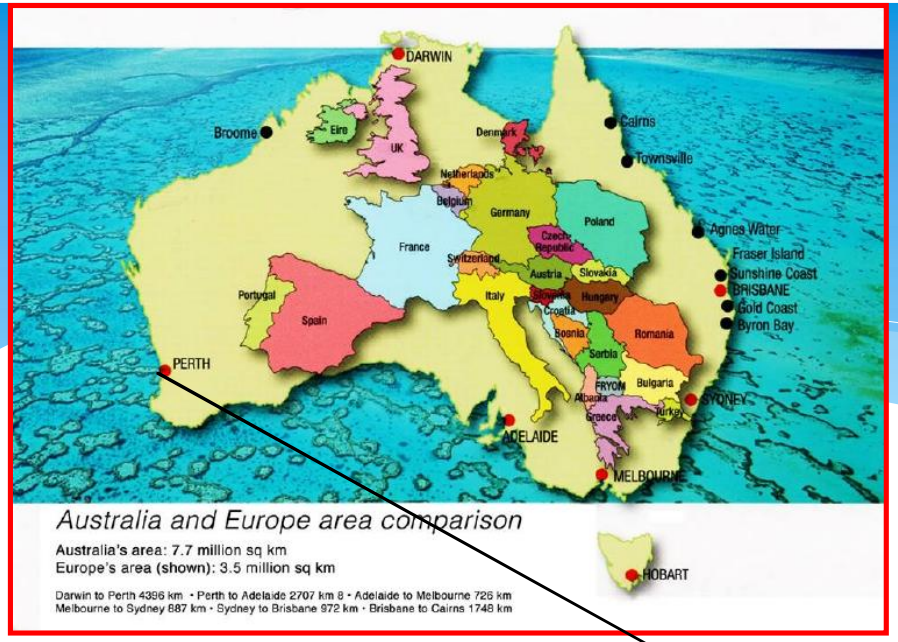
'traitorous cooperation with an enemy'

synonyms: fraternizing, fraternization, colluding, collusion, cooperating, cooperation, consorting, sympathizing, sympathy; conspiring

en.oxforddictionaries.com
Oxford University Press 2017

Collaborative Practice

- When working as part of a Conductive team we learn to be flexible and adaptable.
- Especially important when we have to meet the cultural and educational demands of specific countries.
- WA is very isolated! Collaborative working is imperative when you have only a few Teacher/Conductors working across a provision in order to offer best practice.
- Also need to consider the ever-changing cohort of students



Just to put things into perspective!

- Perth -> Darwin 2647km
- Perth -> Adelaide 2135km
- Perth -> Melbourne 2727km
- Perth -> Canberra 3083km
- Perth -> Sydney 3297km
- Perth -> Brisbane 3613km

http://www.distancefromto.net

Every child can learn!

What Does Collaboration Look Like at Carson Street?

- We work with the youngest children in our 0-4 CE Parent and Child groups and those Parents/Grandparents/Carers are our first collaborative partners. They gain knowledge and skills on how to work with their child from the teacher/conductor, EAs, school SP and from other parents.

- Moving into school aged services the list of collaborative partners that we come into contact with on a regular basis in the delivery of our educational programmes grows considerably!

- As a school we have evolved our working practices over the years to ensure the best collaborative partnerships are part and parcel of our school ethos.

Who Do We Collaborate With?

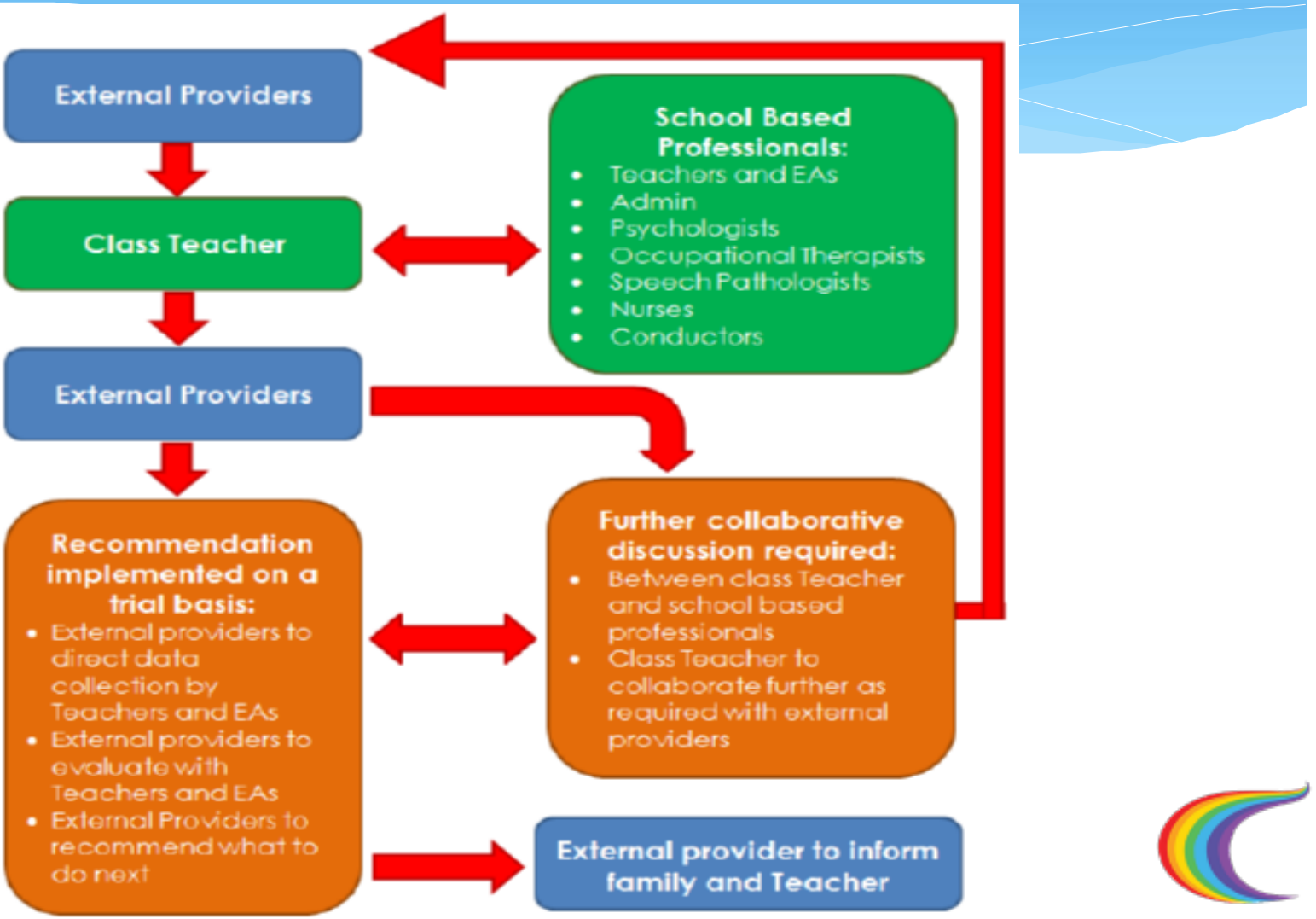
Within School;

- Fellow Teacher/Conductors
- Colleagues – Aspects of CE Teachers, Teachers, Administration (Principal, Deputy, Registrar, Office staff)
- Specialist Teachers – Music, Swimming, Physical Education
- School Psychologists
- School Nurses
- Risk Assessment Team
- OT/SP employed by school
- Occupational Health and Safety Officer
- School Chaplin
- School Parents and Citizens Association
- Parents/Carers
- Students
- Bus drivers/ escorts

Outside School;

- Teacher/Conductors – across Australia and the world!
- Student's individual Therapy Providers
- Behaviour, Autism, Vision and Hearing Specialists
- Child Protection and Family Services
- Visiting teachers – vision and hearing, disability
- Strong Families/Aboriginal Health Team
  Princess Margaret Hospital
- DOE – various departments
- Network South Schools
- WAESSPA
- AASE
- Rural and remote schools
- Conductive Education Charity of WA
- AGOSCI
- ILC
- Mainstream Schools with children in transition
- 'Buddy' schools – Perth Modern
- Immigration and TRB

Flow chart of our collaborative practices in school:



Marrying CE with other disciplines:

- Historically;
  - CE views the child as a whole and is an educational approach.
  - Allied Health professionals often worked in isolation, addressing their own area of expertise – medical model.
- Changing now with Allied teams often having a 'key' worker who acts as conduit between provisions. Teams often visit together with time allocated to discuss the child.
- CE staff provide PL opportunities for external agencies.
- All stakeholders are invited to the child's IEP meeting.
- Open door policy, however all visitors are requested to make appointments to ensure adequate time to meet and discuss outcomes.

What works?

- The flow chart gives us structure to our collaborative practice and a plan of action to follow.
- We contact therapists via email and arrange visits at mutually agreeable times and vice versa.
- Sharing of expertise and professional discussions to deliver successful outcomes.
- Mutual respect.
- Termly meetings between our Administration team and the main Therapy Provider for the school.

Challenges:

- Professional jealousies still exist.
- Lack of expertise on both sides.
- Location.
- Time and hard work!
- Financial implications
- Willingness.

Successes:

- In my Pre-Primary class;
  - 7 students with 6 different Therapy Providers
  - Approximately 21 different therapists to accommodate!
  - Numerous visits from therapists this term alone to address varying issues.
  - Time set aside at end of visit to discuss the outcomes.
  - Any practice recommended is put into place and data collected on outcomes of intervention.
  - Follow-up meetings arranged to review.
  - IEP meetings – all stake holders invited to attend and offer input.
  - Worked with visiting teachers, nurses, PMH, Chaplin too.
- This is indicative of practice across school.
- Success further afield.

Who Benefits?

Where are we now?

- Continuing to review our process to ensure that it is best practice and meets the needs of our ever changing cohort of students.

- Technology has made the world a much smaller place and offers much more accessibility.

Where to next?

- For Carson Street School - building those collaborative working relationships with all of the agencies that we come into contact with.
- Sharing our journey with others and supporting them to take the first step on their journey too.
- For you ……..?

References:

- *The Development of the Petó System*, Ildiko Kozma, 1997
- *Conductive Education*, Hári & Ákos, 1988: 141
- *Definition of Collaboration*, Oxford University Press, 2017

Thank you!

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