

PMLD LINK

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SPRING 1992

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At the end of February we had our first formal meeting of the editorial team: Barry Carpenter (founder member), Tina Tilstone of Birmingham University, Loretto Lambe of PRMH Project based at Pipier Hill School and myself. This will be the last time that I shall be writing the first page of PMLD-Link for some time, as we have agreed to take it in turns to start the ball rolling, and this will provide a wider perspective. We decided to set up more formal contacts in all parts of the country, to encourage more people to write in with their ideas, comments, needs and to tell us what they are doing in their workplace. We would be very interested to hear from people working with adults in all types of provision. This, after all, is where our pupils are going in due course.

Where do your pupils go when they reach school leaving age? Do they have day placements at local centres, is there alternative provision - if so, what is this? Or do they face the prospect of being at home all day with little or nothing to do? Let us know what the position is in your area, and how the school prepares the senior PMLD pupils for whatever lies ahead for them in adult life.

What do you do with your back copies of PMLD-Link? Do they go in the bin or are they saved? An index has been commissioned so that it will be easier to find that bit of information which was in one of the back copies of the Link but you can't remember which one. We hope this will be useful to you.

Carol Ouvry
March 1992

"Touch is a basic behavioural need, much as breath is a basic physical need. When the need for touch remains unsatisfied, abnormal behaviour will result". Ref (1) A. Montague 1986.

AROMATHERAPY

Essential oils are the pure distillation of oils from plants. Depending on the oil, they may originate from the flower, leaf, bark, root or fruit of the plant. Some oils are difficult to produce because of the short flowering times or simply because of the sheer amount of petals needed, i.e. Rose Oil or Neroli (Orange Blossom).

Oils have one common factor in that they are all natural and highly concentrated. Because of their strength and potential power it is important that they are treated and used with respect. The aroma of the essential oils is sensitised by the olfactory nerve in the nose and carried to the brain, where its effect, whether stimulating or relaxing, balances and brings a sense of well being to the mind and body.

An aromatherapist will decide which essential oils to use and combine them with a carrier oil which is then introduced into the skin, lymphatic system and circulation through gentle massage techniques, with full treatment lasting an hour or longer. The essential oils penetrate into the body and can relax the nervous system, stimulate circulation, help detoxify the body, ease aches and pains, headaches and migraine. They also harmonise body and mind to bring a sense of well-being. Unlike prescribed pills they do not have side effects and the true skill of an aromatherapist is in selecting and applying the best combination of oils for the physiological and psychological needs of the client.

Here at the F.E. Centre we use aromatherapy in a slightly different way, in that we do not use it to treat people for specific ailments. We mainly use the oils to relax and stimulate people and also to increase their touch tolerance through massage. We use two basic kinds of massage:

* 1. Multisensory Massage: the use of different textures, massage tools, oils and lotions fragranced with essential oils used within massage to provide the following:

- To increase awareness of tactile experiences and develop simple discrimination skills.
- To increase an individuals awareness of their body.
- To increase tolerance of handling and positioning.

* 2. Interactive Massage: supporting an individual through the following stages :-

Interactive Sequence

- Resists
- Tolerates
- Co-operates passively
- Enjoys
- Responds co-operates
- Leads
- Imitates
- Initiates

Interactive massage is essentially reciprocal and is used to develop trust and communication skills as the person progresses through the interactive sequence. The role of the masseur is to be sensitive, intuitive and as a facilitator.

* Structure and format outlined here was taken from the work of Helen Sanderson, Aromatherapist. (2).

Care of Essential Oils

Essential oils are best kept in dark glass bottles. Blends may be kept in similar bottles. Plastic containers are not suitable for storage as the oils are very strong and will damage them. Make sure the tops are secure as the oils are very volatile. Store in a cool environment away from direct light. Most essential oils will last up to two years. Citrus oils such as Orange and Grapefruit may go cloudy through oxidation after six months in which case they should be discarded. A blended oil if kept in a cool place will last up to three months.

HOW TO USE AND PREPARE OILS

Essential oils are used in other ways apart from massage such as, bathing, inhalations, compresses, scalp treatments, room fragrances, handkerchiefs and perfumes.

The usual quantities to be used are :-

In a bath/Jacuzzi :- Use up to 6 drops of essential oil.
A combination of up to 3 essential oils,
consisting of up to 2 drops per oil.

For a stimulating bath use:-

1 drop Fennel
1 drop Rosemary
2 drops Juniper

For an inhalation :- Allow the steam to come off the bowl of water and put in up to 10 drops of the essential oil such as, Pine, Peppermint or Eucalyptus.

For massage :- Use 20 mls of base oil (almond is the best).
You may add up to 10 drops of essential oil again using a combination of up to 3 oils.

Relaxing massage oils:

Lavender - 6 drops
Geranium - 1 drop
Sandalwood - 3 drops

Stimulating massage oils:

Geranium - 2 drops
Rosewood - 6 drops
Orange - 2 drops

After using the oils make sure students and yourself have a glass of water because of dehydration. Also a good idea to touch a tree after to earth yourself!

Cautions to be taken:

Camphor) We do not use these as they are known to effect

Hyssop) Epilepsy.

Never use neat essential oils directly on the skin. Never use them internally.

Basil, Clove, Cinnamon, Hyssop, Juniper, Marjoram, Myrrer, Sage and Thyme should not be used during the nine months of pregnancy.

Fennel, Peppermint and Rosemary should be avoided in the first 4 months of pregnancy because of their stimulating effect.

Keep essential oils away from the eyes. Should an accident occur, wash immediately with plenty of water and seek medical advice.

Occasionally a persons skin may be sensitive to a particular oil (usually stimulating ones) causing irritation. Generally this will disappear with the hour. Plain almond oil smoothed onto the affected part will help the irritation to subside.

Queen Mary's Hospital

Carshalton

Surrey SM5 4NR

Julia Davies,
November 1991.

Orchard Hill Further Education Centre

London Borough of Sutton

Telephone 01-643 3300

Ext 456

- Ref 1. A. Montague 1986, cited by
H. Sanderson, European Conference on Leisure and Creative Occupation for people with Profound Intellectual and Multiple Disabilities.
2. H. Sanderson, Aromatherapy for People with Learning Disabilities. (To be published).
3. J. West, Aromatherapy Users Manual.
4. C. Westwood Aromatherapy - A guide for home use.

Reading List

A-Z of Aromatherapy - R. Tisserand.
Art of Aromatherapy - R. Tisserand.
Aromatherapy - A Guide for home use - C. Westwood.
Aromatherapy Users Manual - J. West.

AUGMENTATIVE ALTERNATIVE COMMUNICATION

Section 1

INTRODUCTION

AAC is about developing a system of communication for people who cannot speak. Genuine communication is a two-way process to enable both parties to exchange ideas, feelings and comments. It also enables the transference of knowledge and allows for needs to be met. People project their personalities when they communicate with others; failure or absence of communication can lead to frustration, passivity, depression and personality disorders including self-mutilation.

AAC can provide the vehicle for the development of concepts such as class inclusion, time, space, relationships and relativity: the fundamental concepts which underlie the science, mathematics, history and geography curriculum areas. The techniques which an individual learns in order to communicate alternatively can allow access to a wide range of technological aids which will be used to extend the boundaries of possible experience and enhance concept development. AAC can also provide a springboard to literacy and creativity.

Most pupils with PMLD cannot speak, and therefore the development of a system of alternative communication is of vital importance. Long-term progress will depend on the interaction of a number of factors, but the initial stages can be initiated at any age or stage of development, however early. (See section 2).

THE BASICS OF AAC

To devise an alternative communication system you need to choose

a) A vehicle for meaning to be transferred from one partner in the transaction to another. This could be a sound, a picture, a colour,

the written word, spoken word, gesture, photograph etc. or any mutually understood and agreed combination of these.

b) A mutually agreed means of using the vehicle between the speaking and non-speaking partners. This could be a sequence of events such as eye-pointing by the non-speaker, verbal confirmation by the speaker, followed by a gesture by the non-speaker.

For example: speaker... what would you like to do?

non-speaker.... looks at photograph of computer

speaker.. do you want to play on the computer?

non-speaker.... smiles

DESIGNING AN AAC SYSTEM IN SCHOOL

The child should be carefully observed in a variety of settings and in collaboration with key people such as parents, speech-therapist, physiotherapist, people who are close to the child and/or have known the child for a long time, with a view to establishing:

1. what means the child already has for communicating
2. whether the child is motivated to communicate
3. what level of understanding the child displays of situations, language, gestures, signs
4. whether the child recognises pictures and is able to relate pictures to objects
5. whether the child has any deficits of eyesight or hearing, memory or attention-span
6. what movements are at the child's disposal for pointing, gesturing etc.

7. what kind of seating is the child usually in whilst in school, and how much variation is there?

8. what kind of situations lead to a breakdown in communications?

A good AAC system should be: Simple - easily learnt by the child and easy to convey to all others who come into contact with the child.

Adaptable- easily installed in a convenient location where it can be seen easily by both parties, and portable.

Progressive- capable of extension as the child's skills and concepts develop.

Section 2

DEVISING an AAC CURRICULUM for the Pupil with PMLD

Stage 1.

It will be necessary in the first instance to establish the pre-requisite skills, identified as follows:

1. the understanding that actions can have identifiable consequences

2. the understanding that some elements in the environment remain the same whilst others are variable

3. the realisation that sounds, gestures and pictures carry meaning

4. the realisation that other people can be used as a resource.

ESTABLISHING AN INTERACTIVE ENVIRONMENT

a) Micro- technology

Analyse the child's needs in terms of what is motivating, what movements are possible and which sensory channels are available. Using micro-technology switches which best suit the child's abilities, ensure that contingencies are available, so that a certain movement or sound is followed by a predictable outcome; for example, pressing the red switch with the right hand selects pop-music on the radio; squeezing the bubble-switch in the left hand causes a display panel to light up. (This is known as an "instant response contingency" because the reward is closely tied to the effort which produced it.) An interface with a built-in timer can be used to regulate the response and build in a memory challenge once the child becomes competent at using the equipment; for instance, one press gives a five-second reward and then the process must be repeated. There are many and varied computer programmes now available which can be matched at the correct cognitive and motivational level to give a consistent response to the child's efforts.

Micro-tech switches and rewards should be available both in the classroom and in the multi-sensory room. They are used in order to establish the concept of cause and effect, and also to provide a rewarding occupation so that the child comes to realise that exploration of the environment has interesting and varied consequences. In this way inward-looking, stereotypical behaviour is avoided, and the child becomes accustomed to looking outside him or herself for interest, amusement and gratification.

b) fostering interpersonal skills

The interactive environment has to convey the fact that the child is separate from other people, and that other people can be a significant source of interest and gratification. Establishing the child's separate identity can be achieved in a number of ways:

Make greetings personal, using touch and talk;

Emphasise the child's name and the significance of his/her
turn in turn-taking activities;

Encourage eye-contact for face-to-face communication;

Mirror facial expressions and repeat sounds that the child
makes;

Leave gaps in the "conversation" for the child to make a
contribution;

Reward the child for reacting appropriately with an instant
response such as a touch;

Respond to any expression of pleasure by repeating the
activity using appropriate simple language, e.g. " did you like that? Let's
do it again."

Respond consistently to the child's output;

In these ways the adult is supplying the contingent response to the
child's activity, and vice-versa, so that communication is taking shape as
a two-way mutually rewarding activity, albeit at a very basic level.

CONSISTENCY AND VARIABILITY

In order to develop the concepts of time and space upon which
mutual understanding depends, the child needs to learn that some elements
of the environment are constant, and others change. "Constants" include
the object concepts relating to permanency, size and shape, and spacial
concepts such as direction. A consistent environment and time-structure

can help to emphasise the difference between things which are variable and those which stay the same. For example, a child will come to realise that a certain piece of music is a precursor to going home; the music used in conjunction with fetching the coat and bag, saying goodbye and proceeding to the hall together make up a recognisable pattern which assumes meaning. Similarly, the sounds and smells of dinner make up a recognisable pattern, although the food may vary.

In this way the child's day is organised into meaningful episodes, each of which will be attended by significant words, pictures, symbols and gestures which can be understood within the context. Within the consistent framework, there will be many opportunities for choices to be made; e.g. "would you like ribena or orange-juice to drink?" "Do you want a red apron or a blue one?" "Would you like some more?" In each case the response may have to be interpreted, for example a smile may be taken to mean yes for a particular individual; once the interpretation has been agreed it must be used consistently by all those communicating with the child.

SYMBOLIC MEANING

For the individual to be able to communicate effectively and creatively, the meanings of gestures, words and symbols which are understood in association with a particular context must be internalised. Eventually they will come to stand for the particular event and context with which they were once closely tied. The ease with which this separation can be achieved will depend on the individual's cognitive capabilities and stage of development. Once the teacher is convinced that a particular "signifier", be it phrase, gesture, picture or some

combination of these, is well understood within a context, steps can be taken to remove it slightly from the supporting situation. For example, if the Makaton sign and symbol for "dinner" are usually used when dinner is placed in front of the child, they could be shown before the child leaves the classroom to go to the dinner-hall; this would introduce a separation of both time and space between the use of the signifier and the event to which it refers. When the child can recognise and distinguish between two or more pictorial symbols, understanding can be checked by saying/signing "We are going for dinner.... can you find me the picture for dinner?"

Once the child understands that a signifier can be used to "call up" an object or event not immediately present, the power and purpose of communication becomes evident. By selecting a symbol, whether it is a miniature object, picture, word or gesture which has an agreed meaning between them, the child can ask the teacher for something which is known to exist but is out of sight. Similarly, the teacher can check the child's understanding of concepts, situations, words and phrases using the symbols. For example, the teacher might say "It's time to go home now, what do you need?".... child looks at the photograph of her coat which is presented with one or two other pictures.

THE SOCIAL CONTEXT

In spite of the obvious value of electronic and microtechnological resources the foremost purpose of the AAC curriculum is to allow the child access to the world of communication which is essentially a social world. Other people are both the primary resource and the primary source of reward. Therefore the use of signs and symbols, and ultimately alternative

communication devices should arise as naturally as possible from the everyday needs and interests of the people involved. Communication at whatever level should be fun and rewarding for its own sake as well as providing a vehicle for more abstract learning at the later stages. The non-verbal child may wish to summon an adult to fulfill some need, or to share and comment on an experience, or to join in with other members of the class or to ask a question; in all these cases the communication device is simply the go-between. The real communication happens between the people involved, and for this to be successful much patience, sensitivity and humour are required.

Early
ELEMENTS OF THE AAC CURRICULUM

Observation, to determine levels of awareness, interests, physical abilities, attention attributes, situational understanding, pre-intentional or intentional communicative behaviour.

Sensory stimulation, to identify which sensory channels the child has most easily available, which experiences the child finds rewarding, and how the child expresses pleasure and displeasure.

Opportunities to explore the environment in a way which is likely to result in consistent and rewarding feedback.

Consistent and stable framework of time and place within which certain elements can be highlighted.

Choice of suitable symbol system with regard to child's characteristics and abilities.

Introduction of symbols in the form of gestures and/or pictures with words and phrases to accompany significant events.

Gradual separation of symbol from object or event.

Gradual progression from low to high symbolic content of signifiers, i.e. miniature objects to photographs to large coloured pictures to smaller black and white representations.

Use of chosen symbol system in every situation.

Opportunities to make choices using facial expression, gesture and symbol.

The Rural Idyll - a learning experience for all.

Because of our large garden I was supplier of natural play materials at the schools where I worked. The one for older children called some of the activities "horticulture", but they certainly made a valuable and enjoyable learning experience out of it. In a good autumn I could gather large amounts of acorns or conkers or recently, beech mast. They were used for exploration or collage and then some were planted - compost is a lovely play material.

All kinds of things were grown from seed indoors, in the greenhouse and then planted out in pots, baskets or flower beds. Everyone was involved in everything - even the cold clay ground. The sweet peas grown up the wire fence were certainly enjoyed by everyone.

I also provided twigs, pine cones, holly and fir branches which smelled lovely in December. Groups from both schools came to the garden to pick up apples, lie under trees and in the hammock, hide in the bushes, be covered with leaves, paddle in the puddles, all the usual things.

They also went to the farm next door to smell and touch the animals. School groups went to the beach too, and played with and brought back the materials they found there. The rural idyll can be a bit of a myth, but real woodsmoke and leaves and bare feet on grass take a lot of beating as sensory experiences.

Pat Atkinson - Adviser for Play Matters and Physiotherapist with
Northwest Durham Child Development Team, Priory Court,
Annfield Plain, Consett, Co. Durham

"Being touched, and caressed,
being massaged,
is food for the infant.
food as necessary
as minerals, vitamins and proteins."

Frederick Leboyer LOVING HANDS

We are familiar with the word AROMATHERAPY, which literally means therapy through fragrance or sweet smells. This occurs when essential oils are warmed in the hand, massaged into the skin, which absorbs and transports them through the body.

Nature provides us with the opportunity to be touched as we pass through the birth canal. The skin and body receives the hugging of the contracting uterus, which stimulates nerves in the skin. A chain reaction occurs, as the nerve endings pass the stimulation to vital systems that control our breathing, blood circulation, excretion, digestion and brain function. This stimulation enables us at birth to function independently in the outside world. At birth, the eyes are closed, but the sense of smell identifies "mum" and the security she represents.

Hearing extends further than smell, and taste brings satisfaction from hunger, and knowledge to the brain. Our experience can be shared with others through the acquisition of language skills.

Frederick LEBOYER likens these senses to 'fingers of the brain', exploring the world, expanding and enriching the infant.

Benefits for the disadvantaged child

During a massage session, which lasts between 1-1 1/2 hours, hands gently encourage the body to "let go" with no effort required from the recipient. Unlike other forms of relaxation, which are taught, and practised before any real benefits are experienced.

Apart from the physical relaxation, the effects of massage, seem to be a more subtle merging of energies between the therapist and receiver. This non-verbal communication frequently breaks down barriers associated with the spoken word.

Changes occur in respiration, a deep inhalation will be followed by a sigh. Holding patterns associated with the back, thoracic area, and shoulders are released. As the face and jaws relax, speech or sound become more audible.

Frequently, children will play contentedly with their fingers, laugh, or make pleasing noises, when previously anger or frustration dominated. Positive feelings of stillness and contentment are felt, together with renewed warmth, joy and generosity. This "uplifting" is experienced as physical lightness, with tasks being easier to perform.

In contrast, negative feelings result from desires or fears of the mind, experienced as mental lethargy, and physical heaviness.

Children describe the effects of massage as "soft and

comfortable", frequently adopting the recovery position. Mothers observe minor habits associated with sleep become apparent, from a quiet corner of the room the gentle rhythm of hands flowing over the child's body, brings peace, revitalising the mother too!

JANET AGER 8 Thorpefield Close, St. Albans, Herts AL4 9TJ

"Focus" on Social Skills and Personal Relationships

Barrs Court School would like to draw your attention to its PSE curriculum which is now available as a publication. FOCUS is designed to meet the needs of students with SLD or PMLD and is in line with current thinking of the NCC. It enables the monitoring of progress in all aspects of personal hygiene, diet, general health and sexual knowledge.

FOCUS also contains suggestions as to how to assess accurately students' needs, techniques for assisting with the teaching of socially acceptable behaviour and a resource section of material concerning PSE.

Lambert Bignall, former HMI with responsibility for children with SEN, has been instrumental in both its production and promotion; to date, in excess of 500 copies have been sold (since September 1990) to schools, FE establishments and Social Education Centres, either singularly to augment existing programmes, or else in multiples.

FOCUS is available either from Barrs Court School at a cost of £3.95 + 55p p & p or from Nottingham Group Limited, Ludlow Hill Road, West Bridgford, Nottingham, NG2 6HD.

Stuart Dove,
Headteacher,
Barrs Court School,
Barrs Court Road,
Hereford, HR1 1EQ

Vibro - Medico

VIBRO - MEDICO 20 Church Road, Hadleigh, Essex SS7 2DQ Telephone: 0702-557966

Clifford S.O. Black F.Inst. S.M.M.

The Vibro-Platform

We all know that enthusiasm is the key to success, and in your field of work especially so, with results perhaps that little bit more elusive but, once achieved, are most rewarding. It was a mixture of excitement and enthusiasm displayed some years ago which rubbed off on to me when, as a research co-ordinator, I first became involved with the use of cycloid vibration in relation to multiply disabled children.

The centre-point of interest was the vibro-platform (Base Unit) producing exciting and stunning results, which I later developed for school use, only too well aware of the significant role it could play, especially for those children so disadvantaged with such limited horizons. I have since supplied 100's to schools all over the country and abroad, and the feed-back is always the same - unbounded enthusiasm and excitement with the results.

Unfortunately, and I am acutely aware of this, there are still too many schools, seemingly, unaware of the benefits associated with this product, an item I feel, which certainly for SLD schools where there is usually to be found small groups of severely handicapped children who largely benefit most, should be standard equipment, leaving gaps which need filling.

It is most unlikely that such successes experienced by so many schools should not equally apply to others, to whom letters are sent with, it appears, no interest manifested at all..peculiar, isn't it? Some people have reservations about the use of vibration, which is understandable, possibly based on past experience, but cycloid vibration is rather different..it has been medically researched for over forty years with no adverse effects found or reported. Also, schools might be using other methods or regimes, where it is thought this might interfere; here, I am assured, it could in fact compliment what is being done. It's worth thinking about, and possibly further on in the letter you will see why.

The vibro-platform (Base Unit) is a wooden platform which stands about 6" off the floor, well varnished and produced in four sizes to accommodate all ages, even adults. Nothing much to look at! There is a choice of two systems: 24v., which operates via a Vibropulse Controller with mains connection, or 240v., with direct connection. The whole platform vibrates, controlled from very low to quite high speeds (approx. 70Hz), and due to the cycloidal pattern of vibration the amplitude is minute and totally penetrating. Children are placed upon the Unit surface, usually using a physio type mat for comfort or, if necessary complete with support frame or chair. Using a low setting the usual response is that of joy, signs of evident enjoyment and good eye contact, usually holding attention for the duration of use, normally about twenty minutes. Once introduced, children with unwanted stereotypic behaviour patterns enjoy bursts of higher setting vibration, which interrupts their activity pattern and can be used to correct and eliminate them.

Sole Distributor of:- NIAGARA THERAPY VIBRO-TACTILE PRODUCTS to the Health and Education Authorities

Continued over leaf...

conti.

Once introduced to children the Unit immediately becomes a superior stimuli amongst the near senses..gustatory, olfactory, and kinaesthetic, improving distance senses (visual, auditory). Children may be diagnosed as 'deaf' or 'blind' not because of any physiological impairment but rather because their capacity to functionally use their vision or hearing has not yet developed. It is known that a child diagnosed blind, over the months as the motor skills improved so it became apparent that the child was not blind at all. So finding the most effective near-sense stimuli can act as a trigger leading to overall advancement and reassessment. The Base Unit (24v system) facilitates the use of self-operating switches, such as micro-computer which you most probably use with other children, so encouraging the development of motor skills both gross and fine.

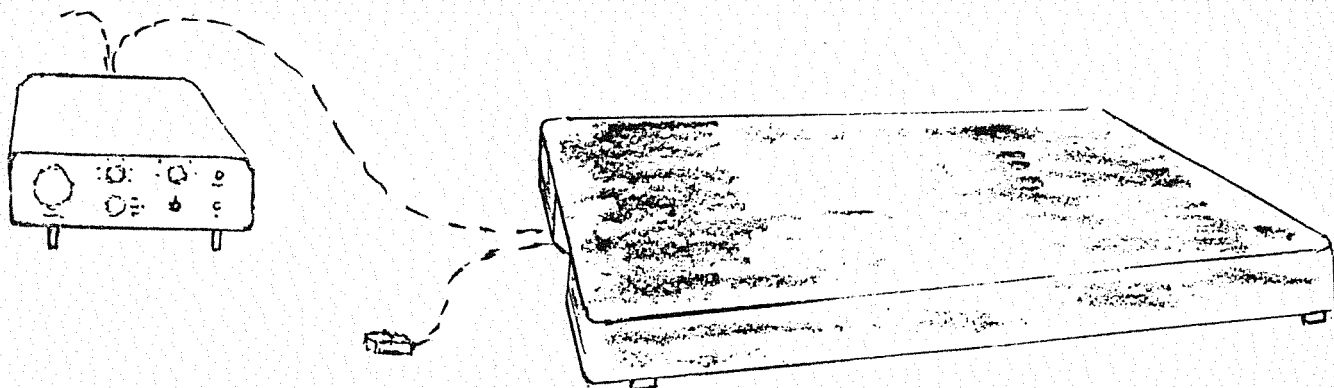
In terms of physiotherapy it has no equal, see Physiotherapy Jnl.March, 1991,p234. Placed upon the Base Unit using the lower speed(frequency) range, inhibits motor impulses, relaxing muscle groups hitherto individually relaxed, only more effectively and easily. Another form of shaking, possibly, only via neuro-receptors by mechanical means. Relaxation varies up to several hours after vibration, improving circulation and, of course, opening up more opportunities for physios to exercise and mobilize joints and, as it can be applied several times a day if need be, eliminates the fear of contractures. This deep relaxation effect leads to improved bladder and bowel management, reducing the need for enemas, plus improved posture control and so many other benefits. Your physiotherapist will know much more than I can possibly record here. And don't forget chesty children.

I have attempted to cover the subject in the space available. Hopefully, you will glean something from it to stimulate discussion and interest, and I very much hope, some action towards introducing it into your school. If you are an SLD school then it is very probable that you will have such a group of children who would directly benefit, apart from the others who would gain some reward material benefit. As I have already stated, it adds excitement, interest, and results. There are many children enjoying a quality of life which would have been denied them had it not been for a simple wooden platform. I would add that there is a Hand Unit vibrator which I supply, for individual muscle treatment, used mostly by physios. It is often asked,"doesn't the vibro Base Unit confuse children when it used for both..behavioural modification and physiotherapy?" The answer, strange to say, is no, the two uses work very well side by side.

Please join the club, we all need each other.

Yours sincerely,

C.S.O. Black
Enc.



BOOK REVIEW

Literacy for All : A 'Whole Language Approach' to the English National Curriculum for Pupils with Severe and Complex Learning Difficulties

Authors : Diana Ackerman and Helen Mount

Publishers : David Fulton Ltd

ISBN 1-85346-188-1

Any book that gives this much attention to the important area of Literacy, and its application to pupils with severe learning difficulties, cannot fail to make a meaningful contribution to curriculum development in Special Education. That is so for this book, but not without provoking healthy debate.

This book follows on the successful Manchester Teacher Fellows series lead by *Fagg, Aherne, Thornber and Skelton (1990)*. An earlier text on "Communication for All" (*Aherne et al., 1990*) provided a full discussion of the English attainment target one, Speaking and Listening. Hence, this book concentrates on Reading, Writing, Spelling and Handwriting.

The book opens with a thought-provoking forward by Professor Mittler, whose relentless campaigning for "the entitlement curriculum" has done much to raise the debate surrounding the National Curriculum for pupils with special educational needs.

The key pupil group considered in this book are those with severe and complex learning difficulties. This time there is a useful explanation of the term "complex learning difficulties" which was lacking in the previous books. The "literate environment" and its impact on pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties is also discussed. Indeed, there are messages here which would be of value to all teachers of pupils with special educational needs.

The authors have surveyed a wide range of sources from mainstream and special education in compiling this document, and provide some useful information on issues which may not have been extensively debated in Special Education i.e. the apprenticeship approach. Augmentative approaches, (signs, symbols and tactile stimuli) are interwoven into the classroom activity examples. The potential contribution of information technology is identified at several points in the book.

The major drawback of this book is its heavy reliance on documentation produced by Manchester Education Committee (which is perhaps to be expected from two teachers in their employ). However, this assumes a certain amount of background knowledge from the reader, and when this is lacking it leads to fragmented understanding on the part of the reader.

Overall, this book opens up a valuable debate around aspects of English which may not have received rigorous attention in the curriculum of S.L.D. Schools, i.e Spelling. It is a pity, therefore, that there are also some glaring omissions of key areas of literacy research from the field of severe learning difficulties which have greatly improved our understanding of the learning process in these pupils. (i.e. Buckley's work in Portsmouth on reading for children with Down's Syndrome). Whilst we strive to offer pupils to severe learning difficulties learning experiences within the National Curriculum, it should be blended with our existing knowledge of how such children learn.

Inevitably, a book produced with the obvious amount of thought and preparation displayed by this one, will make a valuable contribution to the curriculum debate currently surrounding the education of pupils with severe learning difficulties. At a time when schools are undertaking a major curriculum re-appraisal the information and illuminative pupil profiles offered in this book are essential to stimulating and guiding that re-appraisal.

Barry Carpenter
Inspector (Special Educational Needs)
Solihull

HELP AND INFORMATION

Does anyone have any information about where Liz Clough is now living and working? She was a PGCE student at Bristol Polytechnic in 1980/81. Suzie Mitchell would love to make contact again!

Suzie Mitchell has left High/Scope UK and is now living in London at 59 Lynette Avenue, Clapham, London SW4 9HF.

C. Donnison-Post of City of Leeds School, Woodhouse Lane, Leeds LS2 8BP wrote asking for any resource/books/magazines that would be useful in developing links between the school and a school for PMLD pupils. Has anyone any ideas? I am sure that an account of any successful links you may have made would be appreciated.

Helen Dando of Ysgol Cefn Glas, Llangewydd Road, Bridgend, Mid Glamorgan CF31 4JP says that the school has recently developed a sensory environment studio. Does anyone ave any relevant information about the use of a studi, or any ideal for equipment/themes which might be of use.

SEND YOUR REQUESTS FOR INFORMATION OR HELP TO BE INCLUDED IN NEXT TERM'S ISSUE

RNIB Information Service on Multiple Disability

Free Leaflets

We publish a range of factsheets which are available free of charge. These are deliberately basic as we are well aware that most staff working with blind adults with multiple disabilities have had no training whatsoever in visual disability.

More leaflets are planned, but the following are available now:-

- *** RNIB Information and Training Services on Multiple Disability - a brief outline of the work.**
- *** How to Get the Best Out of Sight Testing of Adults with Learning Disabilities and/or No Obvious Means of Communication - some hints as to how to get other professionals involved where commonly used methods may not work.**
- *** Visual Disability and Learning Difficulties - A Basic Introduction - a leaflet intended to highlight some of the issues for work with learning disabled people who were born with little or no sight;**
- *** Hints on Teaching Skills to People with Visual and Learning Disabilities - a leaflet which we hope will make staff consider techniques useful for blind people;**
- *** Guiding Blind People who are Wheelchair-Users - a leaflet to highlight the needs of wheelchair-users and complement RNIB's existing leaflet, 'How to Guide a Blind Person', which explains how to help people who can walk.**
- *** A Selected Reading List - books chosen by RNIB's Information and Training Officers - recently revised.**
- *** Benefits for Registered Blind and Partially Sighted People - more information is available from RNIB Benefit Rights Office.**

Newsletter - Focus

Three times a year we publish our newsletter, Focus, which is for staff working with adults with visual and severe learning disabilities. This is available on subscription - £4.00 for three editions - but we will always send a free sample copy to anyone.

Further information from:-

Gill Levy/Julia Wensley
Information Service on Multiple Disability
RNIB, 224 Great Portland Street
London
WIN 6AA

Telephone: 071-388 1266 ext 2449/2275

INTERDISCIPLINARY TRAINING DAY ON PRADER-WILLI SYNDROME

THURSDAY 7TH MAY 1992 - HEREFORD EDUCATION CENTRE, HEREFORD

This training day, consisting of talks and workshop discussion groups, is an opportunity for professionals from education, health, social services and residential care to learn more about the particular needs of people with Prader-Willi Syndrome. Some places are also available for parents. Talks include: an Introduction to the Characteristics of PWS, Cognition and Behaviour, and Dietary Management.

Cost of the day, to include refreshments, lunch, and a report: £20 professionals, £5 parents. For more details and an application form, contact: Jackie Waters, Information Officer PWSA (UK), 5 Wollaton Rd, Chaddesden, Derby DE2 4HX Tel. 0332 668790.

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