

PMLD LINK



**Journal for Everyone Working with
Multiple Learning Difficulties**

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PMLD LINK relies on contributions from practitioners, parents, carers and everyone interested in this field

BUSINESS MATTERS

This issue focuses on sensory work, and there have been a record number of contributions. It is obviously a subject which is of great important to many of you and we are delighted that such a variety of perspectives and range of views and information.

PMLD-Link Conference: The recent Conference held at Birmingham University was an ambitious new development for PMLD-Link and it proved to be much more popular than we had anticipated. The very large number people attending demonstrates the need for events which focus on work with this particular group, and the desire for opportunities both for gaining knowledge for and exchanging views and information. The many suggestions made by participants for further events were most interesting, although PMLD-Link cannot, unfortunately, turn into a training organisation and follow up all the ideas put forward. However, it was clear that there is a need for more practical courses with an age/phase focus .

Subscriptions: Thank you to all who have renewed your subscriptions so promptly. We have many recent new subscribers and welcome to you all, and particularly those from overseas who have found PMLD-Link interesting enough to subscribe to. We hope you all enjoy reading the Bulletin. this year

Next Issue: The next issue is focusing on the International Scene and our Editorial in this issue provides us with a very good introduction to the background to this subject.. We are hoping to have contributions from contacts around the world. If you are working, or have any contacts overseas do please write or encourage them to write about their work, and the provision in their country.

Carol Ouvry

INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVES

As you may know, the theme for the spring term edition is international perspectives. The focus will be on current practices in working with pupils, students and adults with profound and multiple learning difficulties and disabilities which are followed in other countries around the world, as well as on the ideas and key issues which are currently engaging the attention of overseas colleagues, families and carers.

The number of international subscribers to PMLD Link is growing: we now have European and North American colleagues who take the publication as well as colleagues in Australia, New Zealand and the Far East. While we hope they will contribute to the editions which cover a single aspect of the work we take the view that it is timely to reflect an international dimension in one edition.

Provision and practice vary widely. Although all of the countries represented in our membership are signatories to the UN Charter on the entitlement of the individual to basic human rights and have accepted the concept of equity with rights and responsibilities for all, this is interpreted and applied nationally in substantially different ways.

The contributions of culture and tradition, the fact that the starting points for development have been necessarily different, the variation in the importance and attention attached to the work, in the size of national budgets, and consequently in the pace of change and of progress combine to place each country at a unique point on the development continuum, with its own set of emphases. There is much to share with others.

It might be thought that those of us living and working within the European Union would be familiar with each other's work. We have agreed social and education policies which aim to secure the interests of people with learning difficulties and disabilities and these are regularly publicised. The European Parliament's recent commitment to the UN Action programme for people with disabilities reaffirms the core principle which underpins its policies:

"Disabled people should share equally in all the rights, benefits, obligations and opportunities of their community, and should receive all support in reaching their full potential enjoying whatever improvement of living conditions and quality of life which may result from social and economic development" (Helioscope, 1994).

The European Union has developed an extensive programme of projects, involving each of the member states in some way, through which the policies are being implemented. It promotes the dissemination of effective practice through the mechanisms it has established for exchanging information, including newsletters and journals, seconding personnel and convening forums for discussion.

With all these efforts we should be aware of what these initiatives have meant for children and adults with profound and multiple learning difficulties and disabilities but for most of us this is not the case. It is often difficult enough to keep up with what is happening within this country, with developments in the adjacent authority and even, sometimes, in the neighbouring school.

And yet, how important it is to know what is happening elsewhere. Sharing information on developments helps us to identify common concerns, to discuss and collaborate, and to sustain efforts to improve the quality of provision.

It is, therefore, alarming to learn that our government is proposing to withdraw from the EU funded Helios Project. This aims to foster links between disability activists, decision makers and professionals at local, regional, national and European level, and to promote public awareness of core issues. When it is evident that we need to continue with, and extend, the ways in which we communicate with each other and to make sure they are as effective as they can be, it is disappointing to face the prospect that we may have to break existing connections.

JOAN BOUCHER

October 1994

Reference

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REFLECTING ON THE SENSORY CURRICULUM Julia Sims

Writing my first assignment for a B.Phil. Ed. course was a daunting task after many years' absence from pen and paper. I survived, and I enjoyed it – and since the title was 'A Sensory Curriculum for Early Years', may I share some reflections with you, as they seem very relevant to our PMLD children and their curriculum.

Being new to special education, my first assignment made me realise how far I had come in my own thinking in terms of the sensory curriculum and its place within the whole curriculum.

I returned to teaching amidst the turmoil of National Curriculum and teachers feeling very concerned about whether special needs were or were not being appropriately addressed. The feelings were linked to a desperate need to hang on to what had been taught pre-National Curriculum in order to remain in control and not be swept away in a sea of ATs and SATs.

My initial introduction to sensory work was spending 20 minutes with a group of PMLD children and wondering why they all fell asleep. This had not often been my experience in mainstream classes! It was later I discovered the real value of those sleepy, relaxed children as part of an ever on-going sensory experience. It was not just an isolated 20 minutes in the Sensory room, but a linking into a system of being in a more relaxed state enabling learning to take place for these special children. Maybe enjoying a drink or close contact with an adult later in the classroom.

In early years we encourage our children to **look** at the puzzle, **listen** for their name, **touch** the tactile number, **smell** the dinner around school in order to build up knowledge which can be stored as information. Each sensory skill can be combined with all the other skills experienced across the curriculum. For us to succeed in any of this work we need to be able to find ways of viewing the child's world as he/she sees it.

I perceive the Sensory Curriculum as being central to PMLD learning, giving access to both the National and Developmental Curriculum in both individual programmes and group activities. It is essential that children begin to understand their surroundings and learning through the senses provides that opportunity. simplifying activities to reduce the amount of information will hopefully lead to PMLD children being able to make sense of their perceptions. They must be given time to respond so that they are able to integrate the experience into their perception, and we as teachers need time to build up a consistent pattern of response in one sensory area. Also it may be necessary to teach a response before expanding on any activity. They should also be given time to let us know what level they are at. We should not assume anything. We must remember that:

"Each experiment advances our knowledge, as it confirms or disconfirms a guess, bringing us closer to viewing the world through the eyes, ears, taste, touch of the infant."

(Bower, 1977, p. 24)

In order to further our beliefs, and in the interests of our children's education, we should turn the National Curriculum inside out and put it on the edge with the developmental curriculum. In this way the Sensory Curriculum becomes central to early learning and forms part of my own simple philosophy for PMLD children.

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HELLO! Video

Ben is five years old. He has profound and multiple learning difficulties and, because of his severe motor impairment, he cannot reach out or grasp at objects. He is also 'cortically blind': his eyes are normal but it seems that his brain cannot pick up the messages sent through his visual pathways. Like most severely visually impaired children, he is fascinated by sound of any sort. Like most visually impaired children with multiple disabilities, he thoroughly enjoys whatever light stimulation he can get.

During the school day, in addition to a wide range of physical exercise and multi-sensory stimulation, Ben spends about twenty minutes on a BBC computer. He watches and listens to programmes such as Alan Bickerstaffe's *Visionbox*, or the range of wonderful Brilliant programmes such as *First Steps* and *Switch On* with their bright, highly contrasted images and interesting sounds. He is able to activate these programs by pressing a touch sensitive switch with his cheek. It is obvious that he relishes this activity, smiling and cooing at the sounds, and directing his gaze at the bright, moving shapes on the screen. Because of the severity of his visual impairment, it is likely that these back-lit computer programs, together with disco-type lights in the darkened multi-sensory room, are the most powerful form of visual stimulation Ben can receive.

Once Ben arrives home from school, this kind of stimulation is not available to him. His parents have seen his positive response to the computer, and sometimes borrow a BBC over the holidays for him to use in a darkened room. However, when things get hectic, and many other demands are being made on the parent in charge, there often isn't time to change the program or attend to any unco-operative computer. Nevertheless, Ben's parents - and the parents of all the other Bens I work with - would very much like to be able to provide their children with a high level of stimulation during those periods when they are too busy to work/play actively with their children themselves.

About two years ago it occurred to me that the obvious way to transfer the computer-based visual stimulation programs to the home was to make them accessible through video. With a little funding from the Royal National Institute for the Blind (RNIB) I was able to work with a computer programmer (who conveniently happened to be a rock musician as well) in order to produce a twenty minute video full of exciting computer-generated images and sounds. Included in the video are key words such as 'up', 'open', 'hello', as well as everyday sounds like the telephone, water running, car engines - sounds which would be familiar and meaningful to children like Ben.

The video, called HELLO! has been available for the last six months and has been well received by parents. One mother wrote to tell me that she now knows the types of images that catch her daughter's attention and how long her attention span is; she also relates certain images and sounds to reality, such as the running water before bath time, hello with a kiss, up, up, up the stairs. Another mother told me that she felt I must have had exactly her daughter in mind when I made the video, as I had used all the sounds and images her child particularly enjoys!

Apparently young siblings enjoy watching the video as well, so it can be a joint experience in which the disabled child is able to give pleasure to the family through her/his special equipment.

I have written detailed notes on the wrap-around about how best to use the video, as well as some comments on the basics of visual stimulation for children with very poor vision. At this stage, the video can be enjoyed only passively, as I have not yet found a switch interface box that can turn videos on and off successfully. Any suggestions would be gratefully received.

The video costs £8.00 (including post and package) and is available from: Oxfordshire Visual Impairment Service, West Oxford Primary School, Ferry Hinksey Road, Oxford OX7 5HB. Cheques should be made payable to Visual Impairment Donation Account.

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NOSES IN ACTION

Every day we breathe over 23,000 times and flood our bodies with molecules of odour. These smells pass through about five million receptor cells in our nose. They go straight to that part of the brain (the limbic region) which controls emotions, feelings, lust and memory. Our brains respond instantly to any of the half million smells floating around in the air - smells which trigger powerful emotions and memories. As a moving example -

"Eventually, Claire was admitted to hospital for the last time. During her brief periods of consciousness the telephone would ring at the centre and her pony would set out for the ward. The natural warm smell of that pony would overwhelm the clinical atmosphere of the ward as he peered curiously through the raised sash window. The bed faced towards the window so that she could see him. When she died, she was very happy."

from "Four Legs", an article by Keith Lloyd Webb in *PMLD Link*, Summer, 1994.

The ability to smell appears to develop even before birth. Research shows that premature newly born babies react to smells as young as 28 weeks gestation. Smell is with us throughout our lives and the sense of smell is fairly intact until our seventies. Research shows that women have a more acute sense of smell. For example, they are 1,000 times better at recognising musk than men - increasing to 10,000 times better during ovulation.

Very special people are also busily breathing all through their lives, and this provides continuous opportunities to provide smell which carefully stimulates - and also educates. For example, when deciding which smell to use to provoke a reaction or indicate a location, research shows that the following smells elicit the most noticeable responses.

<i>vinegar</i> <i>asafoetida (Eastern spice)</i> <i>lavender</i> <i>anise</i> <i>phenyl ethyl alcohol</i>	⇒ babies react with alertness
<i>sweat</i> <i>faeces</i> <i>bananas</i>	⇒ 3-4 year olds find the most pleasurable

Natural, unusual and contrived smells surround the very special person all through the day. When we find a smell offensive, we open a window. If we do not like the smell of a person sat nearby, we move discreetly away or make sure we do not sit next to that person again. We seek out enticing smells, lingering in Body Shop, or a perfume shop, or outside a bakery.

Very special people do not usually have this personal control over smells. We need to be sensitive to their choice and promote self-advocacy in smell. We need to make sure that smells change significantly during the day and observe closely the smells that are preferred, rejected or assimilated as part of a learning process.

Make sure that the smell environment is not overpowering. We can only assimilate and use two to three smells at a time without overload and smell "switch off". There is a danger, for example, if all staff have a "smell" wrist band for identification - just count how many times adults interact with very special people in an hour - overwhelming the nose!

Remember that smells are found in multiple layers within an environment. Try sniffing at foot level as a child uses a side-lyer - smelly socks and a dusty floor? Perhaps you can consistently identify a specific section of floor space by using beeswax polish to identify the area and the learning situation. —

Tables 1 and 2 on the following page contain some "smelly ideas" for you to try.

Good sniffing!

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Morell Chemical Senses Centre brochure, Philadelphia, USA, 1993.

Venolia, Carol, *Healing Environments*, published by Celestial Arts, Berkeley, California, 1988.

Worwood, Valerie Anne, *The Fragrant Pharmacy*, 1990, Macmillan, London (lots of smell recipes and ideas).

TABLE 1 - ENVIRONMENTS.

Use these smells to enhance and extend learning situations. To use the smell in a room, use a plant sprayer containing eight drops of the chosen essential oil in 600 ml. of water. Use a very fine spray.

Smell	Purpose	When to Use
peppermint	the brain is 15% more alert and attentive with this smell	for alertness and to help thinking processes
lavender	an uplifting smell	use in the morning
geranium	a calming smell	use after a lively session or other excitement
apple	smell of autumn time	harvest time and autumn activities
nutmeg cinnamon tangerine	winter time memories	use at Christmas time and in pot pourris & cooking
ground sea weed (from herbalist) & sea salt	slows down electrical impulses to the brain and curbs aggression	use to calm and provide a stable environment
rose (also use joss sticks)	Mohammed had rose water used in the mortar for building temples; rosaries were originally rose leaves rolled and threaded on a string	meditation, collective worship time, RE lessons

TABLE 2 - OBJECTS OF REFERENCE.

Objects of reference are concrete symbols of an activity. Attach a smell to the object to enhance its meaning and to maximise remembrance of the activity. Remember to renew the smells. Examples include:

miniature minibus (transport)	⇒	<i>tuck cotton wool inside the toy and put a drop of diesel on it.</i>
rolling pin (cookery)	⇒	<i>drops of vanilla on a wooden one.</i>
armband (swimming)	⇒	<i>wipe with diluted chlorine.</i>
photographs (Mum & Dad)	⇒	<i>spray with her perfume and his aftershave</i>
drumsticks (music)	⇒	<i>rub with sandalwood oil</i>

ASSESSMENT, RECORDING AND REPORTING OF THE SENSORY CURRICULUM

The Redway School, Bletchley, caters for one hundred 2–19-year-old children and young people with severe learning difficulties. Amongst this group there is a growing population of children with profound and multiple learning difficulties and additional needs. In 1993, we started to re-examine our curriculum for these particular pupils.

With the NCC *Curriculum Guidance* publications, particularly nos 2, 3 and 9, and the *Dearing Review*, we knew we had to find a way of formalising the assessment, recording and reporting of the work that we were doing with these pupils under the so-called 'Sensory Curriculum'). We also needed to be able to provide clear documentation as to how we were using sensory approaches to provide a broad, balanced and differentiated curriculum for all our pupils.

After closer investigation and research, it became clear that, rather than delivering the 'Sensory Curriculum' in isolation, we should be using sensory approaches to provide access to and enhancement of the National Curriculum Programmes of Study, and hence ensuring its permeation across all other areas of the Curriculum. Within our Whole School Curriculum, I was able to identify two main areas of need for sensory input:

- a) prerequisite sensory stimulation work for individuals and small groups
- b) group work which included sensory delivery for some of the children as part of its entirety.

It was obvious within these areas alone that keeping track of the Sensory Curriculum was quite a challenge. Where, why and how it was used was not consistent, and this was inevitably leading to an increasingly broad range of strategies for assessing, recording and reporting activities.

The activities for those children in Group (a) generally take place away from the classroom, and include individual sense stimulation, visual and auditory assessment and development, and work that reinforces other classroom activities to ensure pupils have had maximum opportunity to perceive and assimilate relevant experiences. These activities seem to require, for their successful assessment, recording and reporting, detailed close observation, for the purposes of which sheets and charts that show clear objectives, suggest strategies, and allow for clear comments suffice.

Children which fall into Group (b) will require sensory input within a differentiated class activity to provide them with the relevant aspect of their curriculum. How to record the sensory aspect of a lesson or activity which is presented under a National Curriculum heading, e.g. Science, is not as clear-cut for this group as it is for Group (a). We must, however, be careful not to deny children experiences just because we find it difficult to assess their responses.

Equal opportunities for all pupils is an undeniable right, and it is up to us, as Special Educators, to provide a curriculum that not only delivers this, but also ensures progression and development that is clear to pupils and parents as well as to staff. Video and photographic evidence may be the most encouraging form of reviewing a child's progress, whereas a written report under National Curriculum headings is a legal requirement and must be relevant, not tokenistic.

It is vital to ensure that terminology is consistent and, if a child has been in an 'English' activity, whether delivered through sensory approaches or not, recording and reporting should appear under 'English'. If a certain child is receiving some extra sensory support to reinforce a previous Geography lesson, then this should be recorded under 'Geography' with clear explanation as to the nature of the relevant activity.

Being able to explain clearly to all interested parties *why* we have used particular headings and *how* sensory work has enabled us to assess, record and report on progress gained within such activities, makes understanding and celebrating all achievements much more tangible and can make annual reviews and reports much more 'user friendly'.

Before we can assess, record and report this aspect of our work to maximum effect, I believe we first need to ensure that the place of sensory work is very clear within our curriculum. To do this, we need:

- 1) to look at the way in which we differentiate our teaching for those students who require additional sensory input to aid their understanding
- 2) to give timetable allowance to those students who require extra support
- 3) to create a Whole School Policy on what we record and report under which heading
- 4) to establish a focus away from the sensory curriculum being a subject in isolation and towards its becoming a fundamental and integral part of our Whole School Curriculum
- 5) to introduce a curriculum model that allows for development and flexibility
- 6) to develop a baseline format for sensory assessment which includes parents/carers, therapists and other professionals.

An evaluation of strategy based on the aspects highlighted above is, I believe, a realistic and progressive way forward for establishing the sensory approach as a recognised method of support for children with particular needs. As professionals, we need the simplest and yet the most effective method to (a) store and (b) retrieve the massive amounts of information that we gather through our work. The National Curriculum has, in part, provided a vehicle for this in giving us terminology that is clear to both Special and Mainstream Educators, and by making us look again at the Curriculum we provide in Special Schools. The sensory work that we have

been developing for several years, and which is now being researched and written about by several authors (Flo Longhorn being the major protagonist), can be used to demonstrate to all how individual needs can be met using legislation which was not initially written with many of our children's needs in mind.

With changing special school populations, sensory approaches will play an increasing role in future work and, if constantly developed, will continue to provide children with the rich, exciting, challenging and progressive curriculum they are all entitled to.

Nicky Moss

August 1994

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[This school-based research project was undertaken as part of a B.Phil. (Ed.) unit in Special Education from Westminster College, Oxford.]

EFFECTIVE PRACTICE IN LIGHT ROOM TECHNOLOGY

"Can I have the Mass in C Minor please?", says David. Only it isn't David that is speaking, it's a pre-recorded voice coming out of a small speaker situated on the back of his wheelchair. David, now sixteen, is registered blind, has spastic quadriplegia, and is in a wheelchair. Finding difficulty in speaking, he is in the process of learning to operate a lap top computer (discreetly tucked in a bag on the back of his chair) with a 'Hear-Say Programme'.

With a slight touch on a single switch that is 'velcroed' on his wheelchair pommel underneath his tray, he can listen via an ear piece to information and when he hears what he wishes to say he presses the switch again. "I'll have a Big Mac with extra fries", he 'says', and grins.

It's a long way from simple cause and effect activities in the light room, but that is where David began six years ago. He progressed to using an 'Intro-Talker', but, unfortunately physically he did not have the control to use the machine to its full potential.

Our 'where next' policy brought us to the **Foundation for the Communication for the Disabled** from Woking who provided us with equipment and expertise.

The few years in which David has progressed from simple cause and effect to using the skills he now has, schools, classrooms and homes have also seen a revolution in light rooms and the ensuing technology. From the projector tucked in a spare room or curtained corner of the classroom has evolved a new generation of ready made packages of 'sensory rooms'.

These rooms can be a welcome addition to enhance the world of those who have learning difficulties. However, many questions need to be addressed if experiences are to form the basis of effective learning.

We write from the standpoint of practising teachers with a number of years of experience of using a light room. The term 'light room' is somewhat misleading as the teaching both within and out covers all the senses we use to absorb information and to communicate.

One of us is based at **Tanfield School**, catering for 85 SLD pupils of all ages, and has responsibility for the light room as part of her job description. The other works two days a week in the school as a peripatetic teacher of the visually impaired.

Tanfield school began to develop a light room about six years ago starting with a 'Solar 250 Projector', a rotator, three switches, and a number of old white tablecloths pinned together in the school hall. We were certainly fortunate to witness the responses of our students with complex learning difficulties to this new equipment. Over a period of many months their increased awareness became apparent to all who worked with them.

We were also fortunate in the initial stages of building a light room in having the co-operation of the company developing the equipment. This partnership worked well.

We were eager to test prototypes and we were able to supply information for future projects that were relevant to the needs, abilities and interests of our pupils.

Once in place we soon realised that to use the equipment to the fullest extent we would need to develop a programmed learning situation that was interactive. It was important that once the new skill had been acquired it was able to be transferred to and used in the classroom. It had to link with the curriculum and last but not least, it needed to have some relevance to life outside school.

This is a continually evolving process that takes into account alteration in the children's needs, interests and developing skills; and, in addition, the purchase of additional equipment.

To explain the more practical aspects, we have a card index system we are able to refer to when writing each pupils individual short and long term targets. The curriculum target forms presently in use were written from a culmination of meetings with all staff involved in the education of pupils with complex learning difficulties. Although they are precisely described teaching programmes they are not 'writ in stone'. As new ideas are suggested they are absorbed, used and constantly evaluated. At present the short term target form contains sufficient information for a teacher to know what the target is, how the pupil is positioned and how he will operate a certain switch. Also included are the N.C. areas, the language and phrases that the pupil best responds to and the rewards enjoyed by the pupil. As the school day time is at a premium an easily read, clearly defined teaching objective gives precious time both to teaching and to observing the learning.

Fats Waller is giving his all on the piano and John is nodding in time to the music, absorbed with both the rhythm and the display of lights. He is operating a tape recorder and projector using one switch. John is at the beginning of the road David has travelled and already he has come such a long way. Once frightened of any new sound or touch, John is slowly gaining confidence and willing to explore. Although he has complex learning difficulties and is severely visually impaired John is a young man with a determined personality. Beginning with a switch that responded to body movement John progressed to a platform switch. He has just about enough physical ability to press a platform switch and his world is now beginning to extend beyond his finger tips. His love of music has given us the opportunity to devise his programme around this partiality. John needs little persuasion to press a switch if he knows he will hear music, the problem is, he can get so carried away he takes his hand off the switch to 'conduct'!

In addition to the target and profiles we have devised two 'fun' back up booklets featuring **Dazzle Dragon**, one covering experiences, the second for switch control.

As the light room activities extended it became apparent that unless there was a whole school approach the light room would become a separate entity left to the 'light room teacher'. There was also a need to raise awareness in the correct use and care of equipment; and the importance of maintaining it in constant working order at all times. INSET courses and visual awareness sessions now feature regularly for all staff throughout the school. We also realised how valuable was a reliable repair agency.

Six years on we are still evaluating and absorbing new ideas. We have found that 'expectation' plays a large role and progress is a combination of patience, plus an interest in finding motivating learning activities in which a child can find success. We have learned to take a new target slowly, to explain what is happening, to encourage, reassure, and, to allow our pupils time. Time to absorb, explore, experiment, time for confidence to grow and the gradual cause and effect teaching to take place far beyond the confines of the 'light room'.

Joanne Martin (Tanfield School, Wigan)

Lorraine Bessant (Wigan Service for the Visually Impaired)

THE EVALUATION OF THE SENSORY CURRICULUM FOR MEETING THE NEEDS OF PUPILS WITH PROFOUND MULTIPLE LEARNING DIFFICULTIES

Sensory functions are basic to a full experience of life. Our first and continued awareness comes through touch, smell, taste, sight, sound and movement, and if one or more of these is missing or limited it results in some form of isolation in our daily lives. Sensory experience starts from before birth. It is the basis of our communication with ourselves, our family and the outside world (Smith 1989). If pupils cannot enjoy sensory experiences for themselves it is the responsibility of teachers and educators to present these experiences to the pupils in order to bridge the gap which can cause isolation (Yardley 1970).

Herein lies the benefit and value of a specific multi-sensory curriculum. It should be an integral part of the school curriculum and designed to meet the pupil's individual requirements and needs. Learning through the senses is a building process (Longhorn 1992). Students with severe sensory deficiencies receive restricted stimulation from their surroundings which in turn inhibits the abilities they do have (Clark 1993) and the negative effects of this can be cumulative. Although the sensory curriculum can be of great value in meeting any deficiencies, pupils with profound multiple learning difficulties must not be overwhelmed with multi-sensory stimuli which will only lead to greater confusion. To be of value the sensory curriculum must be appropriate to ability (Ouvry 1987).

To ensure the pupils with profound multiple learning difficulties have access to the sensory curriculum, all staff in contact with them must be involved and encouraged to develop their own initiatives in providing opportunities for the pupils and responsive to the needs of the pupils (Carpenter 1989). The sensory curriculum as a basis for learning can be applied to all areas of the curriculum developing awareness and extending the experiences of the pupils, but in every case it must be meaningful to the pupils (Longhorn 1993).

The essential benefit of the sensory curriculum to pupils with profound multiple learning difficulties is communication (Evans and Ware 1987, Ouvry 1987). All staff in contact with pupils with profound multiple learning difficulties should be receptive to any kind of communication and responsive to it. The slightest effort to communicate by a pupil with profound multiple learning difficulties reflects a deep need and it is important it should not go unnoticed (Longhorn 1993). The use of Makaton can also be a helpful approach since it is easily modified and may be particularly accessible to pupils with communication difficulties (Ferris-Taylor 1993).

Information Technology can present sensory information in a variety of ways which can offer stimulation by colour, sound, light, vibration and movement. For those pupils with some understanding of cause and effect the experience of making things happen with switches can be a revelation (Paul Roberts as cited in Ashdown, Carpenter and Bovair 1991).

It is important to recognise that in F.E. provision the sensory curriculum needs to be delivered in a more adult and age appropriate manner involving a wider range of activities with access provided outside the school environment just as much in it (Tomkins and Carpenter 1990).

In order to assess and evaluate the roll of the sensory curriculum and the level of access for pupils with profound multiple learning difficulties to it, a more formal approach than general discussion is required. Staff can be interviewed or invited to reply to a questionnaire. My personal choice would be to use a questionnaire so as not to ask leading questions and in order to give those involved time to consider their replies (Bell 1993). The questionnaire should target the essential areas of sensory input into the school curriculum; the extent of the sensory curriculum in operation, its application to the environment, the resources needed to implement it and the methods of communication at a sensory level within the group.

The extent and depth of the use of a sensory curriculum can be identified in each department of the school, as well as the level at which sensory achievement is recorded and used as a basis for assessment.

Although it is unlikely that any one school can provide an environment to meet all sensory curriculum needs at any one time, a wide range of environments can be created by "setting up" and adapting the basic facilities which already exist. The full use of environmental opportunities is directly related to the availability of staff and the staff/pupil ratio.

Tied in with the human resources are other material resources available within the school and the extent to which the staff are able to extract maximum experience from them for the pupils. In using resources in isolation or combination the aim should always be to extend the sensory experiences on offer to pupils with profound multiple learning difficulties. The reinforcement of experiences gained at school by extending them to the home environment, as well as encouraging parents to participate and share experiences at school, is a resource which can easily be underused.

Staff need to be aware of the range of methods of communication with and from pupils bearing in mind that the most vital factor when working with pupils with profound multiple learning difficulties is to allow the pupil time and space in which to respond. It should be remembered that communication is a two way process and the aim of the sensory curriculum is to develop this.

There will be gaps in the Sensory Curriculum of any school when measured against the ideal presented in current literature. The value of the sensory curriculum as a resource for teacher development is becoming more widely recognised and the important role of the P.M.L.D. Co-ordinator within the school cannot be too greatly emphasised.

It is essential to have a Sensory Curriculum Policy Statement with which all staff should be familiar and which should be reviewed annually.

Anne Bowe
The Park School

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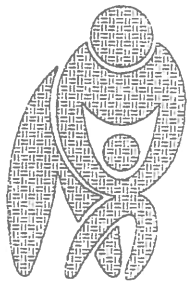
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Gorse Bank School

No Person is Too Disabled to Communicate

In schools all over Britain, teachers, care staff and therapists are working very hard to help improve the communication skills of pupils with special needs. Large amounts of money are being spent on high tech equipment with varying degrees of success. On courses we see evidence of children with severe learning difficulties (SLD) conversing, playing games and generally having the quality of their lives and the lives of their carers improved. It is exciting and encouraging for those of us working with such pupils. We come away from these courses fired with enthusiasm, with stimulating ideas, and our pupils benefit. We can try working with real objects, photographs, symbols, synthesised speakers and so on. It is a slow process but we know it works, so we are encouraged to keep on trying.

But what of the pupils with profound multiple learning difficulties (PMLD)? In the past few years when attending courses, very few suggestions have been made as to how these pupils can be helped. PMLD pupils have the same rights to communication as all other pupils, but have greater needs. If these needs are being addressed, why are we not hearing about it ?

Because they often do not bring attention to themselves, we are not disturbed by these pupils, nor in some instances do we have the same degree of parental pressure to provide them with the means of communication for this very reason. Too often we assume that their cognitive abilities are as limited as their physical skills. It is too easy to talk at the pupils, to be kind and caring, but what about them? What are they thinking and feeling ? Do we listen to what they have to tell us? Do we look for the different ways they try to tell us things? If by pressing a switch and making a noise they could convey one simple message - "I don't like that" think how the quality of their lives could be improved.

Where do we begin to help these pupils? Do we need expensive equipment used in conjunction with highly qualified people? No! We need TIME and patience. Even the most disabled pupil does communicate. We need to watch and wait and be confident in making informed judgements to establish what their skills are. Not being able to communicate successfully leads to frustration, sometimes resulting in unacceptable behaviour. At Gorse Bank School, a communication project has been set up to address this very problem.

The seeds of the project came from trying to access what the pupil who has profound difficulties communicating is trying to say. These frustrations are familiar to all of us, but what is needed at this point are clear aims. The main thrust is to identify in every pupil ways in which they can and do communicate, to for the pupils to be actively involved in their own learning.

The team set up consisted of a Speech Therapist, Teacher for the Visually Impaired, Physiotherapist and Teacher for the Hearing Impaired. This is co-ordinated by Bridget, Class Teacher.

The Speech Therapist, Rachel Samuels, works in school for the equivalent of one and a half days a week. At the onset of the project her role changed, in order that she could spend one half day in the communication meetings; the reviews which follow would become a central feature of this project. One half day would be in the classroom - working with the pupils to be assessed. The remaining time would be for the other aspects of her job throughout the school. This guarantees every pupil concentrated input from the Speech Therapist, and meets the objectives of the project.

The Teacher for the Visually Impaired pupils, Kay Wrench, has been involved in a more advisory capacity, but has been invaluable. She has given of her time and expertise, advising us on handling, approach and equipment. She has made lists and copies of computer disks and advised on switches and other computer accessories. As Kay works closely with the ACE / ACCESS team in Oldham we have been fortunate in getting guidance from them as to what equipment would be useful. This has led to a further project relating to use of technology as an integral part of learning within our environment which encourages communication.

The Physiotherapist, Pam Norbury, has provided advice on seating and supports enabling safe secure access for the pupils during assessment and subsequent development of communication strategies. She reads the follow up reports and looks for ways to include recommendations into the on-going Physiotherapy objective for the pupils.

At this point it is worth noting that classroom staff were not involved in the project.

Following a workshop on the "My turn to speak" pack, (an excellent programme, but, we concluded, not suited to our pupils) we decided to start, as they did, by videoing the pupil in the normal classroom situation. This also helps to pinpoint communication skills which may pass unnoticed in a busy active classroom.

The video is viewed by classroom staff, Therapists, and team teacher first, to accommodate open, free discussion. It is important to note this first step. A follow up meeting is held, involving all those closely associated with the pupil, (parents, guardians, breakaway family, grand parents, partners siblings.....) to discuss the communication priorities. A checklist is completed to establish existing communication skills, and to focus on areas to be addressed.

The important point to emphasis is that every child has communication skills. Initially this may be a point of disagreement but without exception parents have been agreeably surprised at how positive the meetings have been.

For some parents communication is seen as speaking (a distant objective for many of our pupils) and because of this they tend not to venture too far along the path of communication. They are however very happy to be guided once they are made aware of the possible outcomes. Many of our parents who came in self protective and unsure, became enthusiastic participants of the meetings, offering entertaining, very informative anecdotes about their children. All this adds to the understanding we, as staff have of the pupil, and is a fascinating way of positively developing parent / school relationships. It quickly became very apparent just how reassuring for parents it was, to have a group of skilled professionals willing to spend time, in consultation with them, helping to plan the best way forward for their child.

At this meeting long term aims and short term objectives are set. The short term objectives are important to establish success as a key component of the project.

They should be:

- a) agreed on by all.
- b) easy to accommodate in the classroom and at home.
- c) achievable by consistency across adults.
- d) prerequisites for more complex skills.

Once these have been agreed, equipment is decided on and purchased for the pupil to carry forward the learning process. The progress of the pupil is then regularly reviewed and aims and objectives updated involving the original people where possible. Once every pupil has been assessed and their needs identified it then becomes a self perpetuating process.

The main worries at this point for some people would be cost and time. It is important to note that this type of project does not need a large cash outlay. Our first expenditure totalled £149. This was for low tech equipment (photo frames, photo albums, pictures, toys etc.) and met the needs of more than one pupil. Also, the school placed at the discretion of class staff a small proportion of their yearly capitation to buy essential and agreed communication equipment, linked to the objectives noted above.

Since the project has been so successful we have subsequently set up a "Friends of Gorse Bank" association to fund the project. This has enabled a focus to be given to specific fundraising events and safe-guarded School Fund to be used for the usual day to day needs.

The issue of time is a difficult one. It is a question of deciding on priorities; the questions expressed earlier in this article need consideration. Furthermore, any project such as this needs the full backing and understanding of Senior Management.

Also, through Gorse Bank's current involvement with T.V.E.I., the project is being evaluated by Paul Davies from Lancaster University. The focus of this interest is involving pupils in their own learning. Through the very fact of identifying ways in which the whole range of pupils communicate we are in fact addressing this issue. Paul has been able to experience every step of the project in progress and has subsequently interviewed parents, school staff and visiting professionals. His involvement has enabled us to reflect and refine the way the project is developing. The outcome of Paul's involvement will not only be quality, objective evaluation, but the development of inset material.

A significant outcome in developing the strategies mentioned so far is the ability to help pupils with profound, multiple learning difficulties have a more active role in their own learning. Despite the many hours and experience which now goes into working with such pupils - much frustration for pupils and staff still exists regarding this perplexing issue.

Through the opportunity to video pupils as part of their communication development, the film footage can now be used for other purposes.

Recording achievement is currently done through a variety of means. But what is proposed here is to edit very short segments of the filming to provide evidence of progress and achievement made by such pupils. For example, where an 8 year old girl is beginning to communicate "yes" by slowly, deliberately, closing her eyelids in response to choice questions, filming such a skill provides the opportunity of sharing this development with all concerned. By observation through daily routine, and videoing a particular pupil, we are gaining an opportunity to repeatedly review a pupils method(s) of communicating. Secondly, and with the use of computer software, the video footage can be divided into individual picture frames which are transferred onto screen or printer to provide separate photos illustrating a moment of achievement or communicating from a pupil.

By employing a technician, the process is now in place to continue the communication project and selectively copy evidence onto a pupils individual video record of achievement. This process far from taking the place of conventional recording of achievement actually enhances and provides an exciting new option for gathering evidence.

It does take time to set up the process - observation, filming a pupil, reviewing the video, meeting with other key school staff and then meeting with parents / guardians / relatives and Therapist, setting aims and objectives, establishing the programme and reviewing each pupil, but in reality the process takes less time than it appears to on paper. It is very rewarding for staff and pupils, and we would highly recommend starting such a project.

The benefits are -

- * an improved method of assessment, evaluation and specific pupil programmes to develop communication strategies;
- * greater involvement in their own learning;
- * a new dimension of reviewing with parents in a very positive climate ways their daughter or son can and does communicate;
- * drawing together, in a common purpose, the skills of a multi- disciplinary team to focus on one pupil at a given time;
- * being able to generate evidence to back-up statements of achievement;

We are at the present time putting together a package entitled "Take Time To Listen" to be used for staff development, if you would like further information or if we can be of any help, please feel free to contact us at Gorse Bank School.

BRIDGET NOLAN (CLASS TEACHER / PROJECT LEADER)

DAVE CALVERT (DEPUTY HEAD)

Gorse Bank School, Foxdenton Lane, Chadderton, OL9 9QR. Telephone & Fax 061 652 1316
Headteacher Mrs A. Greaves B.Ed (Hons)

TAKE TIME TO LISTEN

The communication package for use by staff with any pupil but particularly SLD, PMLD., will consist of :-

- * Video

- * Manual - Introduction
 - use of video (eg. Normal classroom setting)
 - Introductory meeting (Professionals)
 - Second meeting (Parents and Professionals)
 - Setting aims / objectives
 - Reviews
 - Putting together video evidence of pupils involved in their own learning
 - Recording progress

- * Photocopiable sheets (checklists, aims, objectives, recording sheets).

A PERSONAL VIEW OF SENSORY APPROACHES

At a recent meeting with Carol Ouvry, she asked me to write a personal account of my interest and introduction to sensory approaches.

I was working as an occupational therapist with people with profound multiple disabilities in South Manchester when Flo Longhorn's "Sensory Curriculum for very special people" came out, and then the word 'Snoezelen' was first heard. I was instantly fascinated. After my initial exploration of the idea of a sensory approach, I began to search for a developmental rationale for using a sensory approach rather than the leisure approach used at de Hartenburg.

Nicola Gitsham, and OT in Oxford was exploring similar lines, and together we began to look at how the senses could be used to improve a person's quality of life as described by the framework known as "The Five Accomplishments" Using this as a starting point we looked at how sensory activities or stimulation could help people develop from "when I do this something happens" to "when I do this I can make this happen" (Piaget's primary and secondary circular reactions).

We also started to look at different kinds of sensory stimulation using the Affective Communication Assessment (Coupe et al) and considered the links between sensory stimulation and sensory integration. We found Knickerbocker's work and that of McInnes and Treffrey exciting frameworks of how people responded and could develop in response to such stimulation. Nicola also first introduced me to aromatherapy, and the first seeds of Multisensory Massage and Interactive Massage were sown here. Oxford Health Authority asked us to run a few courses on what we had found, and how we were using this in practice in Manchester and Oxford and the handouts from these courses became a course handbook called "The Holistic Sensory Approach".

My interest in aromatherapy had been kindled and it seemed to me that an activity such as aromatherapy which involved positive touch through massage and a wide range of smells had potential for the people I was working with. I trained as an aromatherapist to find out more. At that time I cared little about the possible therapeutic effects of essential oils, but obviously since then I have become convinced!

Aromatherapists use essential oils to relax, invigorate and improve health, but it soon became evident that this was only the beginning of its possibilities with people with profound and multiple disabilities. I began working with Jane Harrison in Birmingham who had recently trained as a massage therapist and had put an advertisement in "Mental Handicap" to see whether anyone else was using massage. That was the beginning of our work together - how many people do you admit to meeting through an advert in a magazine!

My sensory approach led to using massage, essential oils, textures and massage tools in what we called Multisensory Massage, and used it to expand people's experiences of touch. We used the Affective Communication Assessment to find out how people responded. McInnes and Treffrey's interactive sequence seemed made for massage and Interactive Massage developed as we watched how people responded to this new experience.

Similarly, we were asked to do a few courses, and what was supposed to be a collection of handouts eventually became "Aromatherapy and Massage for People with Learning Difficulties". Research for the book led me into the fascinating world of the importance of touch, and I am continuing to look at touch, development and communication with Dave Hewett as we consider where Interactive Massage and Intensive Interaction meet.

Being involved in promoting the use of the senses with people with learning difficulties has affected my own life in many ways as I have begun to recognise that a sensory approach has improved the quality of my own life. One of my favourite ways to relax now is to sit on my garden bench, which is covered with an arch smothered in jasmine and honeysuckle next to a lavender bed with chamomile at my feet. The scene is complete with the distant sound of a wind chime. Even the birth of my first child took place in a birthing pool at home, in a room lit with candles and scented with essential oils. Massage from my partner and the support of the water helped to ease my daughter Elena into her first sensory experience outside the womb.

It is the use of the senses for quality of life that I find myself continually returning to as I consider sensory approaches. I am continuing to look at this through the discipline of a PH.D focusing on quality of life, communication, and planning for people with profound multiple disabilities.

As I mentioned at the beginning, it was meeting Carol at Birmingham University, and then attending a training day for regional tutors of the course "Interdisciplinary Work with People with Profound and Multiple Learning Disabilities" which prompted this review. One of the activities which the tutors were asked to do was to discuss a number of scenarios with students. One which I clearly remember is what do you say if a student says that in the light of their new knowledge, what he/she has been doing has been all wrong. I think most of us have been there. When we look back we can identify practices which we now cringe at, and I am certainly no exception. Some of the practices which I wrote about in the aromatherapy book have moved on, for example I initially used pieces of material and textures as part of Multisensory Massage, but now, working mainly with adults, I only use the commercially available massage tools which anyone would use - and there are many of these available at Boots and the Body Shop.

I was responsible for one of the first sensory rooms in a day centre in Manchester. I have become less and less convinced about the use of sensory rooms for adults and the arguments of leisure and therapy which I then used to use to justify it. I think that the whole area of sensory stimulation needs to be related much more to function, directly to helping people to live as members of the community, using an ecological rather than a sensory developmental approach. This does not mean that the senses are ignored, instead they are used in the context of activities which help people with profound multiple disabilities to become more involved in the sort of life which we take for granted. In a more traditional curriculum, gross motor and self help skills feature highly, whereas in an ecological model, leisure, vocational, domestic and community functioning feature highly.

Lizanne Jones describes this in the book "Innovations in Educating Children with Severe Learning Difficulties." She gives an example of Sally, and how the

senses can be used to help Sally learn domestic skills. For example, as Sally enjoys playing in water, she is involved in washing up after meals. She helps to put away spoons in a cutlery drawer. Spoons are bright and easy for her to see. As she is interested in textures she helps to put clothes in the washing machine. She also practices domestic skills in play situations. Under 'community functioning' Sally is encouraged to take an item from the shelf in a shop as she can reach out and grasp bright objects. This is practised in the school shop in the classroom and carried out once a week in the 'real environment'. The chapter goes on to describe how Sally's own interests and skills for splashing in water, listening to sounds and feeling textures have been incorporated into functional skills important for everyday life.

In my own use of sensory approaches, I still think that sensory activities are essential for use within the Affective Communication Assessment to find out what people respond to, and those responses can be shaped into meaningful communication. The activities we enjoy for leisure that have strong sensory aspects like aromatherapy, massage and gardening are also important for people with profound multiple disabilities. In the future I shall be looking more and more at how I can use sensory stimulation within a more functional or ecological approach.

Helen Sanderson

SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

DISTANCE EDUCATION COURSES

We offer courses (full-time or distance education) in a wide range of specialisms, including the following distance education courses:

LEARNING DIFFICULTIES

(Diploma; BPhil(Ed); MEd)

MULTI-SENSORY IMPAIRMENT (DEAFBLINDNESS)

(Advanced Certificate; Diploma; BPhil(Ed); MEd)

PROFOUND & MULTIPLE LEARNING DISABILITIES

(BILD Certificate; Advanced Certificate)



**THE UNIVERSITY
OF BIRMINGHAM**

The courses are designed for people (usually, but not always, teachers) working with learners with these disabilities. Students remain in their own work setting, and the courses consist of regional and national day and weekend seminars, together with materials specially developed for home study.

Applications are now being accepted for courses beginning September 1995. For more information, please contact:
The Admissions Office, Faculty of Education and Continuing Studies, The University of Birmingham, Birmingham B15 2TT. Tel: 021-414-4887.

SPECIALIST WRITING FOR PUBLICATION
a publisher's advice

With funds so scarce for training the PMLD teachers of the future - and for up-dating the insights and skills of existing teachers - rapid publication of the best practice and theoretical developments becomes a low-cost, if high-effort, means of assisting professional development across the country. Little wonder that more and more members of PMLD Link are using this method of spreading their expertise, and that specialist publishers can find a readership hungry for well written and reasonably priced books on the issues of the day.

There is certainly no shortage of topics to keep up with and there are no signs of a flagging demand for high quality education and care for children with severe and profound learning difficulties. Evidence for an extremely dynamic information exchange within the wider SEN community is the number and diversity of books submitted for the annual TES/NASEN academic book award. Many of the best-received titles are those by authors working - and succeeding against high odds - at the extremes of severe handicap and scant resources.

So..... if you have been thinking of 'having a go', how do you get started? What steps can you take to link the things you know and care most about with an identifiable group of like-minded readers out there? In touch with a publisher or two, how do you present your case, how do you weigh up your potential sponsors, how do you *know* you'll get the collaboration to bring it off? And how do you protect yourself? After all, writing is a demanding business, especially the first time. You, of all people, haven't time to waste and no one wants to be ripped off!

Planning the campaign

Talk to booksellers, librarians and professional colleagues - including active author members of PMLD Link - to identify the publishers most active and responsive in your field. Remember that *rapid* publication is what you seek as change is so pervasive and your work must be current when it hits the shops! Also remember to keep absolutely up-to-date with what is being announced and published already - the reader's needs are in a way as important as - the publisher might say more important than - the writer's, and you don't want to duplicate what is already in circulation. Finally, be quite deliberate in auditing your resources, commitments and weaknesses, build in some leeway, and then move only when you know you can finish - sounds obvious but many people fail to do it or don't do it well.

Approaching the organ-grinder

You will be straight into contact with a number of editors, part

of whose stock-in-trade is to persuade budding authors to give them first option. Sidestep this tactic, but meet the interested editors at the first opportunity. Your goal should be to assess the degree of sympathy and potential on-going support likely to materialise in what, for you, is a major investment of time, resources and emotional energy. Horror-stories of procrastination abound in this trade! There's no shame in 'playing the field', though most publishers like to be told that they're in some kind of contest. They also expect a considered and constructive response to sensible requests for change, whether their own or their readers'. Invariably with little information volunteered about the editors' mid to long term career goals, you *absolutely must* take a view on how long this or that editor is likely to stay in the job. New editors are innately sceptical about the brain-children of their predecessors, and a perfect rapport can change overnight into a suspicious antipathy - just when you most needed support!

Negotiating the deal

A key starting point is to rank the various forms of benefit coming to you from successful publication. Publishing in PMLD is no way to a fortune for publisher or author, so **money** should perhaps not be near the top of the list. Better to go for **fun** or **glory** or **satisfaction** or **promotion**, and then any financial return can come as an unexpected bonus. This attitude will make it easier for you to accept the publisher's 'standard terms' - small publishers probably can't and won't afford more, while editors in large houses won't have the authority to offer more. They, too, are governed increasingly by spread-sheets.

Performance

Promptness in dealing with correspondence and in meeting writing or proofing deadlines is desirable in both parties - for the author, it brings a moral advantage that can help if the publisher shows signs of delaying production or missing promotion opportunities. Talking to educational authors, one hears of similar books taking dissimilar times to produce - a range from 4-18 months being evident. Most authors would say that 4 months is 'good' and 18 months is 'hopeless'. More than at any time, you are advised to press this point and even to consider asking for a shortish production cycle to be written into the contract - say no more than 9 months. Once the book is out, you should ask your publisher to keep you supplied with leaflets - s/he will be delighted with your non-stop efforts to promote your work!

The Aftermath

There will be a sense of anti-climax - books on PMLD and other educational topics generally *clamber* into their markets - there's no sudden, explosive impact and often it's a long, hard slog. Meanwhile, you will be on to the next project, and there is no compulsion to stay with the same editor or publisher - unless you and they wish it. In that case, a collaborative and amicable relationship can result over many years, in which the publishing of subsequent books can be infinitely easier than the first.

**John Owens, Editorial Director, David Fulton Publishers,
2 Barbon Close, London WC1N 3JX Tel 071 405 5606**

INTERPLAY THEATRE COMPANY

Has your school received details of Interplay Theatre Company's new theatrical event, "Fairground Attractions"? If so, and you are currently thinking about whether to get involved, I would urge you to do so!

A group of my pupils who have profound and multiple disabilities took part, along with a group of pupils with sld from another special school in Worcester, in a week-long theatre project with Interplay at the Swan Theatre in Worcester. We had a wonderful and exciting time working with staff from Interplay led by their artistic director, Jon Palmer, on a project called "The Dream Carpet Factory". Perhaps the following account of the week, as seen from the pupil's perspective, will convey how successful the venture was for them.

Janet Gibbons
Rose Hill School, Worcester

The Dream Carpet Factory

On an ordinary Monday morning, while we were wondering why we were late for assembly, two strange men arrived in our classroom and started doing even stranger things with long pieces of wool. They said they needed our help to measure up for a new carpet. A new carpet for our classroom - how nice!

Then they invited us to the DREAM CARPET FACTORY to help make it. When we got there we met another group of people who were also there to make a carpet so we decided to make one together. Each day for a week we turned up at the factory, clocked on, and warmed up for work by doing our exercises. Well, it works for the Chinese!

Our carpet was a very special shape. We designed it by moving across the floor on our tummies until we had all joined together; the shape we made formed the outline. Then we put the edge on - choosing and helping to cut out pieces. It became a musical border because we all chose a musical instrument and when someone jumped on our edge piece, we had to play it. We really had to watch and concentrate so we'd be ready for our turn.

To make the middle of our carpet, we visited Brinton's carpet factory in Kidderminster to pick up a few tips. It was a big, noisy, hot and colourful place - very exciting. Once we'd seen the machines we were able to weave the middle of our carpet. It looked so lovely when we had finished and before the edge and the middle were put together we all put our own mark on it.

At a celebration we were able to show our families and friends all the hard work we'd put in and our end product. Our carpet is too special to put down on the floor. Lots of people have admired it and for us it has great memories of a week of exciting drama and music and, most importantly, of the fun we had working together to produce it.

FAIRGROUND

A live theatre event for students

ATTRACTIONS

and multiple learning disabilities

Interplay bring you all the fun of the fair in a once in a lifetime ride on the Magical Merry-Go-Round. With the help of three travelling showmen - some of them women! - your pupils will be invited to help erect this amazing ride.

Distorting mirrors, multi-coloured cloth, steam driven devices and musical mechanisms help make up this marvellous machine. But all this is nothing compared to the joy of the final ride, a sensory extravaganza of sight and sound. Thrill as the breeze brushes your faces and the world whizzes by. Breathe in the smell of candy floss and delight in the music of the fair. Whatever touches your senses, we guarantee a truly exhilarating experience.

TOUCHING & FEELING

A mass of contrasting textures and surprising objects

VISUAL DELIGHTS

Mirrors, lights and colourful fairground art to encourage focus and tracking

EVOCATIVE AROMAS

Smells to both excite and soothe

LIVE MUSIC & SOUND

All things musical and mechanical to stimulate the aural senses

TOUCHING THE SENSES

This live theatre experience has been carefully devised to take the participants through a series of sensory exercises. It focuses on different experiences designed to stretch each participant regardless of ability. At each stage the performers and staff members will work together in order to gain the most from each individual. After the stimulating range of fairground attractions the session culminates in a total experience, a simulated ride incorporating all the elements previously explored.

BENEFITTING PUPILS, STAFF & SCHOOLS

For pupils, we aim to:

- promote individual responses and enhance independence
- provide an opportunity for social interaction
- develop a range of communication skills
- investigate skills development
- aid understanding of an environment
- develop cognitive skills
- make the complex simple and the mundane magical!

We provide teachers with ideas for incorporating sensory stimulus in a theme-based topic and give them the opportunity to see their pupils interacting with a new environment.

We provide schools with theatre which is relevant and accessible.

But above all, we hope to give you an exciting day to remember and enjoy.

FORMAT FOR THE DAY

Fairground Attractions is an all-day package. It consists of a morning and an afternoon session, each lasting approximately an hour. We are able to work with up to 12 students per session.

Schools can choose between two options for the day:

- Two separate sessions - for a single group.
- One session repeated - for two groups of students.

We place great emphasis on staff involvement. In order that the students gain maximum benefit, teachers and care staff will receive information on key aspects of the programme and follow up work.

BOOKING

FAIRGROUND ATTRACTIONS

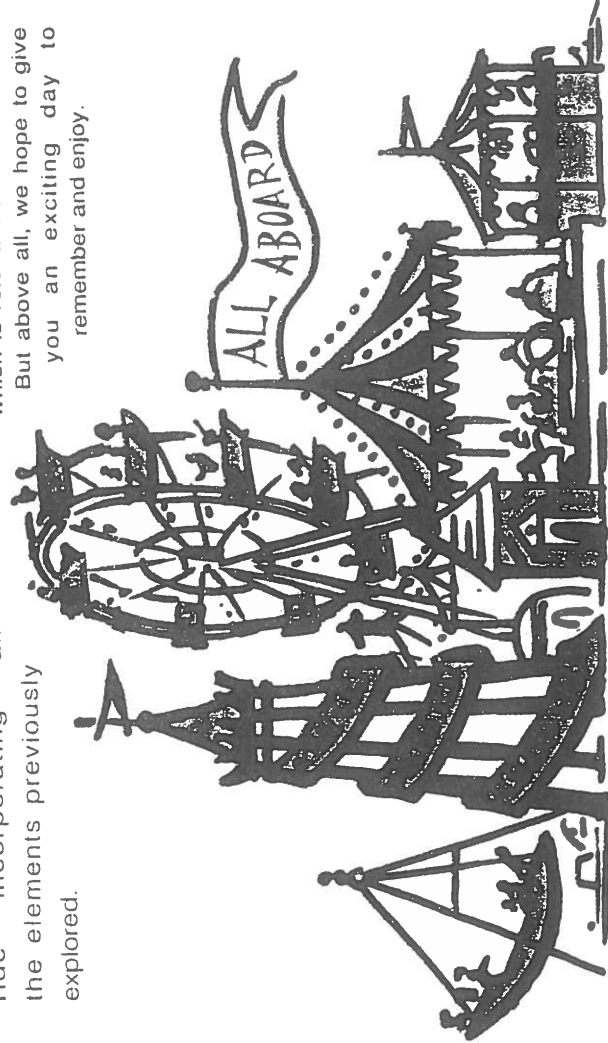
Fairground Attractions will be visiting schools nationally in the Spring 1995 term.

If you wish to find out further details, please call us on **0532 638556**

or write to:

INTERPLAY Theatre Company,

Armley Ridge Road,
Leeds



The Development of an Interactive Distant Learning Pack
on the use of the Creative Arts in
Education, Therapy and Leisure
for People with Profound Learning and Multiple Disabilities

PAMIS (Profound and Multiple Impairment Service) is a new voluntary organisation concerned with the provision of information and training to parents and professionals concerned with children and adults with profound learning disability and multiple impairments.

PAMIS has recently received a grant from the Carnegie UK Trust to develop an interactive distant learning pack concerned with the use of the creative arts with people with profound and multiple disabilities. It is our intention to bring together and collate information on the use of the creative arts in education, therapy and leisure provision for this group. We are taking a broad interpretation of "creative arts". This embraces not only traditional areas such as music, dance, painting, craft work etc, but the use of sensory techniques that provide stimulation with a view to improving function and awareness, as well as enjoyment.

The material will be organised and placed in the context of general reviews dealing with theory and practice, and emphasising the necessity to link education, therapy and leisure in a holistic way.

We would welcome hearing from anyone who is using such techniques with people with profound and multiple disabilities. Written material, videos etc would all be very welcome. Short descriptions in letter form would be helpful, too. No material provided will be used without proper citation, and where relevant, consultation with the contributor. It is also hoped that we will selectively visit some projects and programmes where these are particularly relevant.

We would like to thank any potential contributors in advance.


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Book Reviews:

**THE EFFECTS OF MENTAL RETARDATION, DISABILITY AND ILLNESS ON
SIBLING RELATIONSHIPS: RESEARCH ISSUES AND CHALLENGES**
Zolinda Stoneman & Phyllis Waldman Berman
Paul H Brookes Publishing Company 1993

This volume is a collection of articles from the contributors at a National Institute of Child Health and Human Development 2½ day conference. It aims to present cutting-edge research findings and to provide discussion of the conceptual and methodological challenges for future research. The authors are from many disciplines writing about their findings and insights concerning siblings of individuals with epilepsy, diabetes, spina bifida, Down's Syndrome, mental retardation, cystic fibrosis, etc., which brings us to the first question - can one generalise across different disabilities and illnesses? The answer is not clear but there appear to be a number of common patterns as well as ramifications from specific disabilities.

The target readership would appear to be wide, both researchers and professionals who need to understand the importance of sibling relationships in working with families.

The same points are covered more than once albeit with a different slant. I found the American terminology grated at times, confused at other times.

The book is divided into three sections of which the first, presenting the conceptual issue, was the most readable. There is a long history of concern about the possible negative effects of being reared in a home with a child with a disability or chronic illness, ie the pathological model. However the authors also present the converse - why do some siblings cope so well? The wide range of emotional responses in non disabled sibling relationships is described.

I was interested in the diverse array of qualitative and quantitative methods which have been used in these studies. Stoneman and Brody took the family process model to look at the ways in which the characteristics of the individual sibling and of the family, plus style of parenting and the quality of the marital relationship all added together to influence the sibling relationship. Some of this was predictable, for example children brought up with parents who model compassion and helpfulness and have a warm satisfying marriage where there is an effective problem solving model are clearly creating a home environment which fosters the development of all the family members.

Weisner's contribution was to look at the importance of the family's cultural background which may only be tacitly recognised but which may be the single most important element affecting the parents' beliefs about the cause of disability and expected interdependence of the siblings.

Other authors in this section look at the effects of the movement to a more community based approach in the care of children with disability, where there is more involvement both expected and needed from the family, where the disabled and non disabled siblings may now be going to the same schools. Also considered are the effects of residential placements, times spent in special care baby units and hospitals and marked increase in life expectancy.

There is much importance attached to whether the siblings are younger or older. With younger siblings of disabled children there is encouragement to provide accurate understandable explanations so that these younger ones do not create their own private hypothesis for the illness or disability. As siblings grow older relationships become increasingly asymmetric.

The authors look at the implications of visible handicaps and the cosmetic aspect of these and conversely of hidden disabilities and how this may affect expectations for children.

There appears to be little data as to why some sibling dyads have high rates of conflict and why some siblings of disabled children have adjustment problems but there is much speculation. In particular with older sisters a common factor appears to be the increased child care responsibilities. With all siblings a danger is resentment about unequal allocation of household chores. Other factors discussed are the limited social opportunities which these siblings may have.

There is a good deal of mention of the importance of the mother, in particular how she deals with the chronic sorrow or disappointment from the child's illness or disability and how this affects her responsiveness and thereby her ability to socialise siblings relationship. The authors speculate that the mothers psychological distress, perhaps in a pattern of periodic grieving or crises, may be the factor linking family functioning to the children's problems.

There is some clear evidence as to the negative effects of differential attention or favouritism from parents leading to increased sibling conflict.

The second section looking at research perspectives I found heavy. It analyses the risk and protective factors from different theoretical perspectives, questioning whether the siblings of disabled or chronically ill children are in fact at risk of psychopathology or rather sub clinical adjustment problems. Review of the research certainly suggests that the children most at risk are older sisters and younger brothers but the findings are by no means uniformly negative. Which event or condition is in the end stressful depends on the child's perception of it as well as on the support available.

The third section deals with methodological challenges in future research, for example how to measure stress and coping.

This book raised a lot of interesting questions, and answered some of them but I feel that you will need to be very interested in this topic to want such a detailed review. It might appeal most to those workers counselling families with a disabled or chronically ill child or to those delivering training and support to parents' groups. Perhaps there should be more attention given to sibling groups where information and support could be provided to dispel misconceptions and improve the siblings' understanding of the illness or disability, removing "the web of silence" and helping to acknowledge their secret wish perhaps for a normal brother or sister. The authors cite examples of these groups where there have been short term improvement in terms of improved mood but as yet no long term assessments. They suggest that with the changes in community care and life expectancy that many siblings will now be expected to assume primary responsibility on the death of their parents and that it behoves the mental health services to provide appropriate support.

PATRICIA MATHESON
Educational Psychologist

SENSATIONS AND DISABILITY

Sensory Environments for Leisure, Snoezelen, Education and Therapy

Editors : Roger Hutchinson and Joe Kewin

Publisher : ROMPA

Price : £9.45

Rompa originally printed the English translation in 1987 of Jan Hulsegge and Ad Verheul's excellent book "Snoezelen : Another World" which could be described as a Haynes manual for sensory environments. "Snoezelen : Another World" discussed the original concept of Snoezelen, described in detail the equipment and rooms, the training of professionals and gave some ideas on D-I-Y Snoezelen. A snip at £8.00.

I wondered if 'Sensations and Disability' was going to be an updated version of this earlier Snoezelen book but in fact it is complementary, the two sit comfortably side by side. (Sensations and Disability is the one with no text on the spine!) It is also the most comprehensive book on Snoezelen to date.

This book has pulled together a collection of ideas and experiences of those using Snoezelen both with people with PMLD and those with challenging behaviours. There are a couple of additional chapters on the use of Snoezelen with elderly people with dementia and in the management of chronic pain.

The book describes some of the ways that Snoezelen has been used, reports on some of the research activities and gives some thoughts on future developments.

If you want to find out more about Snoezelen or you are considering purchasing some of the equipment then you might consider buying one of these books. My advice would be to buy both.

John Colvin

White Top Research Unit

Books and Publications:

Listen to Me: communicating the Needs of People with Profound Intellectual and Multiple Disabilities by Pat Fitton, published by Jessica Kingsley Publishers

Educating Children with Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties by Jean Ware published by David Fulton Publishers.

Making Leisure Provision for People with Profound Learning and Multiple Disabilities edited by James Hogg and Judith Cavet published by Chapman & Hall

Resources:

Liberty, Equality, Disability - Images of a Movement
Poster Series by David Hevey.
Available from PLANET Price £8.00

PLANET Resource Pack
Information and advice for everyone concerned with play, leisure and recreation for people with disabilities.
Available from PLANET Price £3.00

The Development of Communication and Feeding for People who have Profound Multiple Disabilities. A workshop training package for parents and carers by Juliet Goldbart, Jenny Warner and Helen Mount Available from MENCAP PIMD Section. Price £42.50

Multisensory Action Pack
A package of activities to help people with profound learning disabilities lead more independent and fulfilled lives. Available from The Social Education Centre, Stallington Hall, Stoke-on-Trent. Price £35.00

Nutrition by Design A Manual of advice on dietary needs of people with disabilities; religious and cultural dietary needs; the elderly; children, and people with medical conditions associated with diet.
Available from Katrine Hurst, New Possibilities NHS Trust, Turner Village, Turner Road, Colchester, Essex CO4 5JP

Odyssey Now
A multisensory interactive drama activity which can be accessed by pupils of all abilities. Available from Storytracks, 86 Bedford Road, London N2 9DA Price £10.00

RNIB Toy Library at Sunshine House School, Southport

"TAC PAC - communication through touch"
Music cassettes with booklet and worksheets.
Available from Resources for Learning Price 20.90

Training: Courses/Conferences

DECEMBER 1994

- 8TH RNIB Sunshine House School Special Interest Morning
Anne Sweeney, Nurse Specialist in Paediatric Epilepsy, Alder Hey Hospital will talk about different types of epileptic seizure and how they affect children.
Further details from Mrs. Judy Bell, RNIB Sunshine House School, 2 Oxford Road, Southport PR8 2JT
Tel. 0704-567174

FEBRUARY 1995

- 7th Bereavement, Loss and People with Learning Disabilities
This one-day workshop examines how to offer practical help and support to a bereaved individual who has learning disabilities
BILD North West Tutor's Group
Further details from MENCAP PIMD Section, Piper Hill School, 200 Yew Tree Lane, Northenden, Manchester

MARCH

- 2ND Intensive Interaction
An Approach to Teaching Communication and Relating to People with very severe Learning Disabilities and to Reducing Challenging Behaviours.
BILD North West Tutor's Group
Further details from MENCAP PIMD Section
- 29th NAIDEX Scottish Exhibition
30th Equipment and Services for disabled and elderly people.
Further information from Fiona Heakin 081-910-7873

APRIL

- 10th ISEC 95 - Fourth International Special Education
to Conference
13th Venue: Birmingham
Further details from Birmingham Convention and Visitor Bureau, International Convention Centre, Broad Street, Birmingham, B1 2EA Tel. 021-665-6116

JUNE

- 14th NAIDEX Northern Exhibition
15th Venue: Doncaster Racecourse
Further details as above.

SEPTEMBER

- 27th NAIDEX International
to Venue: Wembley Exhibition Centre, London
29th Further details as above.