

Visual Communication: Makaton Key Word Signing

Through our regular visits to children's services throughout the ACT, Inclusion Support Facilitators are finding many services are supporting the needs of children who display signs of developmental delay. Developmental delay can be described as a delay in the appearance of some "typical" steps or phases of growth and development. One area where children may experience delays is their receptive and expressive language development. This presents a unique opportunity for staff to rethink how they communicate with children. One strategy that could be employed is the use of Makaton Key Word Signing.

Makaton Key Word Signing encompasses:

- Augmentative Communication. This uses other forms of communication, for example pictures, gestures and signing with speech.
- Alternative Communication. This uses other forms of communication instead of speech such as photos, written text, signed English and finger spelling.

Why use Augmentative and Alternative Communication?

- To decrease frustration
- To encourage children to pay attention and increase eye contact
- To increase self esteem
- To extend communication partners of the child
- To recognise we all have different learning styles and preferred ways of communicating
- To highlight the profile of differences, giving us an opportunity to discuss these differences and promote inclusion.

Who uses Makaton Key Word Signing?

Children and adults with communication needs such as difficulties with:

- Attention
- Comprehension
- Intelligibility
- Developing speech

More information relating to Makaton and resources for augmentative and alternative communication can be found at the following websites:

Makaton Australia
www.newcastle.edu.au/centre/sed/makaton

Dart Acquisition
www.dartproducts.com.au

Spectronics
www.spectronicsinoz.com

Community Calendar

October 4th – 10th Mental Health Week www.mentalhealth.org.au	11th – 18th Down Syndrome Awareness Week www.dsav.asn.au	18th – 24th Carers Week www.carersaustralia.com.au
26th – 31st Children's Week www.childrensweek.org.au	30th National Bandanna Day www.canteen.org.au	November 9th National Recycle Week www.planetark.com
20th – 22nd Bangarra Dance Company's Fire www.canberratheatre.org.au	20th Universal Children's Day www.un.org/dents/dhl/children_day/index.html	December 10th Human Rights Day www.un.org/observances/days_shtml
January 2010 26th Yabun 2010 www.gadigal.org	26th Australia Day in the Park www.australiaday.gov.au/events	26th Chinese New Year
February 2010 14th Library Lovers Day www.librarylovers.org	March 2010 5th Clean Up Australia Day – Schools www.cleanup.org	21st Harmony Day www.harmony.gov.au

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Discrimination and Children's Services: What Are Your Responsibilities?

Discrimination is conduct that disadvantages or has an unfair impact on people from particular groups.

Discrimination laws focus on the basis for the way services treat or propose to treat those who use their services or work for them.

What laws apply?

In the ACT both Territory and Federal discrimination laws apply. Some of these are listed below.

- The Children and Young People Act 2008
www.legislation.act.gov.au
- Discrimination ACT 1991 amended 2004
www.legislation.act.gov.au
- Human Rights ACT 2004 – Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission
www.hreoc.gov.au
- Priority of Access
www.dest.gov.au
- Disability Discrimination ACT 1992
www.comlaw.gov.au

As a children's services provider, it is your responsibility to know of, understand, know how to access and provide information to all staff and families of relevant legislation.

Providing a service to children with disabilities

Start by talking with the child's parents or caregivers and the service's Inclusion Support Facilitator (ISF). Depending on the child's age and the child themselves, determine exactly what the needs of the child are and how they can be met. Sometimes there is no need to do anything differently or simple adjustments can be taken. Together you may be able to

think laterally about how to best ensure that the child's needs are met. For example, it may be useful to talk to the parents about how they manage the particular issue at home. How do they manage the issue if they are away from home in other situations? They may have equipment that the child can bring with them to your service, or be eligible to access the ACT PSC Specialist Equipment Pool.

Sometimes very minor changes are needed to allow the child to participate. They may be simple physical changes such as moving furniture, buying some new equipment or undertaking some minor changes to your routine. Others are more resource intensive; e.g. where a child requires much more intensive staff time than other children.

(Adapted for the ACT from Smyth, Maggie 2008 Discrimination and Children's Services)

More information on this resource can be found at www.cscentral.org.au/publications/childrens-services-central-publications.html

Other useful websites relating to this topic include:

- Disability ACT
www.dhcs.act.gov.au
- NCAC, Equity for Children and Families Document
www.ncac.gov.au
- UN Rights of the Child
www.unicef.org
- Australian Early Childhood Code of Ethics
www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/code_of_ethics
- The Federal Government's Social Inclusion Agenda
www.socialinclusion.gov.au

Community Connection Hub

Finding the Balance: Nurturing Yourself & Others

"We are not weak because we are stressed; we are stressed because we are human"

Wellbeing amongst child care providers is an important issue. Maintaining wellbeing and preventing stress is an ongoing challenge. This hub examines ideas for enhancing your wellbeing and strategies to assist children and families in your care environment.

Date: 22 October 2009
Time: 10 am – 12 noon
Location: Therapy ACT, Holder

To register:
Contact ACT ISA on (02) 6287 3330

Belonging, Being and Becoming: an Early Years Learning Framework for Australia

Belonging, Being and Becoming is the Early Years Learning Framework for Australia which the Commonwealth Government says “describes the principles, practice and outcomes essential to support and enhance young children’s learning from birth to five years of age as well as their transition to school.” Read on and discover what the Framework says about equity and diversity.

High expectations and equity

Early childhood educators who are committed to equity believe in all children’s capacities to succeed, regardless of diverse circumstances and abilities. Children progress well when they, their parents and educators hold high expectations for their achievement in learning.

Educators recognise and respond to barriers to children achieving educational success. In response they challenge practices that contribute to inequities and make curriculum decisions that promote inclusion and participation of all children. By developing their professional knowledge and skills, and working in partnership with children, families, communities, other services and agencies,

they continually strive to find equitable and effective ways to ensure that all children have opportunities to achieve learning outcomes.

Respect for diversity

There are many ways of living, being and of knowing. Children are born belonging to a culture, which is not only influenced by traditional practices, heritage and ancestral knowledge, but also by the experiences, values and beliefs of individual families and communities. Respecting diversity means within the curriculum valuing and reflecting the practices, values and beliefs of families. Educators honour the histories, cultures, languages, traditions, child rearing practices and lifestyle choices of families. They value children’s different capacities and abilities and respect differences in families’ home lives.

Educators recognise that diversity contributes to the richness of our society and provides a valid evidence base about ways of knowing. For Australia it also includes promoting greater understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ways of knowing and being.

When early childhood educators respect the diversity of families and communities, and the aspirations they hold for children, they are able to foster children’s motivation to learn and reinforce their sense of themselves as competent learners. They make curriculum decisions that uphold all children’s rights to have their cultures, identities, abilities and strengths acknowledged and valued, and respond to the complexity of children’s and families’ lives.

Educators think critically about opportunities and dilemmas that can arise from diversity and take action to redress unfairness. They provide opportunities to learn about similarities and difference and about interdependence and how we can learn to live together.

More information on the Early Years Learning Framework can be found at: http://www.deewr.gov.au/EarlyChildhood/Policy_Agenda/Quality/Pages/EarlyYearsLearningFramework.aspx

Service Snap Shot – ST Monica’s Out of School Hours Care (SMOOSH)

St Monica’s Out of School Hours Care (SMOOSH) is a service that provides care for primary school aged children before and after school and during school holidays. Through the fifteen years that we have been operating, the SMOOSH team has cared for students from many different backgrounds and with many diverse needs. The staff work together to meet the varied needs and interests of children by adjusting daily routines, procuring equipment and attending regular professional development.

SMOOSH staff plan activities giving thought to the participation of all students. Most recently some of this programming has included hiring jumping castles, purchasing musical instruments, tactile reading books and afternoon movies.

By getting to know our students through the development of relationships with the children, their schools and families, we are able to develop a sense of what they enjoy doing at SMOOSH and at home and incorporate such things into our daily program. One

of our students enjoyed listening and dancing to music, so we were able to acquire a keyboard which provides endless hours of entertainment for all the children.

Our greatest resource for the inclusion of children with specific needs is definitely their families. Through our orientation processes we are able to gain support from families and offer such assistance as trial afternoons, half days, slow introduction of staff and parent visits. Parents have also been able to provide us with information on subjects such as tube feeding, EpiPen administration and the use of diabetic pumps.

At SMOOSH the staff consider the inclusion of all students a high priority when creating a welcoming environment; allowing all the children to feel a part of the SMOOSH family and to gain the most out of their OOSH care experience.

Opposite: Timothy Garrity and James Hawes enjoying afternoon tea.

Inclusion Support Subsidy and Flexible Support Funding

About the Inclusion Support Subsidy (ISS)

The Inclusion Support Subsidy (ISS) is available to eligible child care services to assist in the inclusion of children who have a demonstrated ongoing need for a high level of support in a child care environment. The subsidy provides funding as a contribution towards the costs associated with employing an additional worker to increase the staff-to-child ratio.

About the Flexible Support Funding (FSF)

Flexible Support Funding (FSF) is time-limited support provided to eligible child care services to build their capacity to include a child with ongoing high support needs, including children with a disability, children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, and children from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds.

For centre-based child care, FSF may be used to employ an additional worker to increase the staff-to-child ratio above licensing requirements for a time-limited period. For

FDC and IHC, FSF may be used to employ an additional worker to enable a child with ongoing high support needs to participate in out-of-home excursions such as playgroups or vacation care excursions. FSF may also be used to provide relief care so that permanent staff can attend training or prepare Service Support Plans.

The funding amount is a contribution towards the costs associated with employing the additional worker and FSF is not intended to cover the full costs associated with employing that worker.

How do services apply for ISS or FSF?

Contact your Inclusion Support Agency – ACT Inclusion Support Agency (02) 6287 3330. Your ISA will arrange for an Inclusion Support Facilitator (ISF) to visit your service and discuss your service needs. Part of this discussion may involve the preparation of a Service Support Plan (SSP). These plans determine if additional assistance is required and what type of assistance would best suit your service needs.

Do you send FSF and ISS Claims for Payment to the same place?

Inclusion Support Funding
When making claims for ISS you send the Claim for Payment paperwork directly to the NISSP team at KU’s Central Office:

National ISS Provider
KU Children’s Services
Box Q132 QVB Post Office
Sydney NSW 1230

For more information please see www.ku.com.au or email ISSinfo@ku.com.au

Flexible Support Funding
When making a claim for FSF you send the Claim for Payment paperwork directly to the ACT Inclusion Support Agency:

ACT Inclusion Support Agency
P O Box 3955
Weston ACT 2611
Phone: (02) 6287 3330
Fax: (02) 6287 4242

inclusion@commsatwork.org



Community Contacts

Parentlink

Parentlink is an ACT Government program which promotes positive parenting through education and the provision of information.

P: 13 3427
www.parentlink.act.gov.au

Child and Family Centres

Child and Family Centres are a first point of contact for any information regarding children and being a parent. Services include Maternal and Child Health Clinic, Speech Pathology Service and supportive chat about parenting and information to manage those “parenting hurdles”, and specialist support for children and their families.

Gungahlin – P: 02 6207 0120
Tuggeranong – P: 02 6207 8228
www.dhcs.act.gov.au/childandfamilycentres

ACT Down Syndrome Association Inc.

Provides support and information to families of people who have Down Syndrome.

P: 02 6290 0656
www.actdsa.au