

Article from **RERC on Communication Enhancement eNews**

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April 5, 2005

Announcing....

Want to know what's new in our world? Check out what we've recently published, posted, produced, and participated in. This quarter, we add a new subsection: personnel happenings.

Personnel Happenings

Rackensperger and Younkerman finish with a flourish

The AAC-RERC wishes to congratulate Tracy Rackensperger from Maitland, Florida and Tom Younkerman from Denver, Colorado for their year tenure on the AAC-RERC Writers Brigade. Each has worked hard, learned a lot, and published numerous articles on AAC-RERC activities. We thank them for their many contributions over the year and we congratulate them for a job very well done. Our best wishes and thanks to Tracy and Tom and we hope they will stay in close touch.

Berlowitz and Chapple to join the AAC-RERC Writers Brigade

Congratulations are in order for the new members of the AAC-RERC Writers Brigade. We are pleased to announce that Ana Berlowitz of Berkeley, California and David Chapple of Ravenna, Ohio will be joining the AAC-RERC Writers Brigade and will be working alongside Joe Hemphill and Bill Geluso under the mentorship of Johana Schwartz, project manager. Congratulations to Ana and to David. We welcome them heartily.

Williams joins Temple's team

We are delighted to have Robert Williams join Temple's team as a consultant with the AAC-RERC. In this capacity, he will be responsible for activities related to "tech watch" and mentoring individuals who rely on AAC regarding employment and web/internet access. Bob co-directs Advancing Independence, a forum that advances policy reforms that enhance the independence of Americans with disabilities. He also served as the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Disability, Aging and Long Term Care Policy and the Commissioner of Developmental Disabilities in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Prior to this, he worked on enacting the ADA and closing Forest Haven, the District of Columbia's public institution. Born with cerebral palsy, Bob relies extensively on AAC as well as assistive and other technologies; he, therefore, brings a unique set of perspectives, abilities, and commitment to his work.



AAC-RERC partners meeting with AAC manufacturers

DeRuyter, Caves, Beukelman, Light, McNaughton, Bryen, Shane, Higginbotham, Williams and Blackstone are meeting with major AAC manufacturers to discuss AAC-RERC projects and share information about areas of common interests. A goal of these meetings is to foster, build, and sustain collaborative relationships with the AAC industry. To date, we have met with the leadership at [Dynavox, Inc.](#), [Zygo Industries](#), and [Words +, Inc.](#) The meetings have all been very productive, and we are all looking forward to an ongoing dialogue with all AAC manufacturers.

Publications Hot Off the Press

The partners and staff of the AAC-RERC have been busy spreading the word through journal and newsletter articles. Here's a list of some of our recent publications. Check the [Pubs & Presentations](#) section our website for a complete bibliography.

- **Active Citizens.** Williams, M.B. (2004). *Alternatively Speaking*, 7:3.
- **Learning of dynamic display AAC technologies by typically developing 3-year-olds: Effect of different layouts and menu approaches.** Drager, K., Light, J., Carlson, R., DSilva, K., Larsson, B., Pitkin, L., Stopper, G. (2004) *Journal of Speech Language Hearing Research*, 47, 1133-1148.
- **Performance of typically developing four and five year old children with AAC systems using different language organization techniques.** Light, J., Drager, K., McCarthy, J. Mellott, S., Parrish, C., Parsons, A., Rhoads, S., Ward, M., & Welliver, M. (2004) *Augmentative and Alternative Communication*, 20, 63-88.
- **The effect of direct instruction and Writers Workshop on the early writing skills of children who use Augmentative and Alternative Communication.** Millar, D., Light, J., & McNaughton, D. (2004) *Augmentative and Alternative Communication*, 20, 164-178.
- **The effects of direct instruction on the single-word reading skills of children who require Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC).** Fallon, K., Light, J., McNaughton, D., Drager, K. & Hammer, C. (2004) *Journal of Speech Language Hearing Research*, 47, 1424-1439.
- **The Full-Time Job of Getting a Full-Time Job.** Rackensperger, T. (2004) *Speak UP*, 19-3/4, December 9, 2004.
- **Toward a Taxonomy of Assistive Technology Device Outcomes.** Jutai, J., Fuhrer, M., Demers, L., Scherer, M., DeRuyter, F. (2005) *American Journal of Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation*, 84:4, 294-302.

New Products on our Website

Our website is constantly changing. Visit often to see what's new. Several of our projects have updated progress on our website. Check out:

- [R1-A: Literacy Support Technologies for AAC Users](#)
- [R2-A: Contextual Scenes for Beginning Communicators](#)
- [R2-B: Contextual Scenes for Adults with Aphasia](#)
- [R2-C: Contextual Scenes and Intelligent Agents for Persons with Autism](#)
- [D2-A: AAC Technology to Supplement Intelligibility of Residual Speech](#)
- [D3-B: Enhancing the Role of Listeners in AAC Interactions](#)
- [T2: AAC Users Writer's Workshop](#)
- [T4: Webcast Series](#)
- [Dissemination](#)

ACETS Training Manual now available

Also new to our website is a brochure and order form for the ACETS training manual. ACETS is an innovative classroom and computer-based program designed to increase employment outcomes for people with significant disabilities who use AAC. The manual is a comprehensive guide to the successful implementation of the ACETS program.

The manual offers teachers, employment training programs, and vocational counselors a promising instructional approach that may be adapted for use in a wide variety of settings including community colleges, employment counseling programs, and high school transition programs.

Postings from ACOLUG

What's a webcast? I'm in college now – where can I find vocabulary words that work for this stage of my life? So what's up next for the Writers Brigade?

Have you ever thought about these questions? Felt like discussing them? Through the Augmentative Communication On-Line Users Group (ACOLUG), you can.

ACOLUG is a LISTSERV created to exchange ideas, information, and experiences on augmentative communication by people from all over the world. By using e-mail, people who use augmentative communication and their friends and families discuss issues related to augmentative communication, such as equipment, funding, learning techniques, and supports. Recently, ACOLUG discussions revolved around:

- AAC-RERC eNewsletter (January 3)
- Webcasts (January 18)
- TriCare and AAC (January 31)
- Vocabulary for College Students (February 14)
- Partners at CSUN & USSAAC (February 27)
- The Writers' Brigade (March 14)

The AAC-RERC provides support to ACOLUG. All you need to join is internet access and an email address. To check it out, visit [ACOLUG](#) on the web.

Dissemination through Participation

AAC Webcasts

The **webcasts** on various AAC and communication-related topics, which began on February 1, 2005, have been very successful, racking up 267 hits during the first few weeks of availability! The first webcast by David McNaughton, Supporting Successful Transition for Individuals who use AAC, is still available for viewing. Future topics include:

- AAC Interventions to Maximize Language Development for Young Children (Janice Light, available May 1, 2005)
- AAC and Aphasia: A Review of Visual Scenes Display Project (David Beukelman, available August 1, 2005)
- An Overview of the Health-based Funding Programs that Cover SGDs (Lew Golinker, available November 1, 2005)

To view the webcasts, go to the [AAC-RERC website](#) and follow the links for Webcasts. The next webcast scheduled is:

AAC Interventions to Maximize Language Development for Young Children

Presenter: Janice Light, Ph.D., Professor, Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders, Penn State University

Availability: May 1, 2005

Webcast Description: Young children who have significant communication disabilities are at risk in all aspects of their development. Early AAC intervention is essential to maximize outcomes. This session will report on the results of a research project, funded by the National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research as part of the AAC-RERC.

The session will discuss: (1) effective designs for AAC systems to better meet the needs and skills of young children, and (2) effective techniques to implement AAC with young children who have significant communication disabilities (ages 0-3) and their families.

Implications for effective evidence-based practice will be discussed using case studies to illustrate the effects of these interventions on language and communication development. With early access to appropriate AAC technologies and services, young children with significant communication disabilities will be better able to build the language and communication skills that they require to achieve their full potential and maximize outcomes.

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