

# NEWSLETTER



Australian Association of Special Education Inc. | WA Chapter

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## President's Comment

Dear AASE Members,

I am sure you hear this from just about everyone but what a year this has been and we are only in June! We have achieved things that we would not have imagined possible before the start of the year and in timeframes that were punishing. It has also highlighted the importance of understanding Special Education as a pedagogy not a place as you have strived to reduce the impact of these changing times on students with disability.

In this newsletter we have included some key points from the Council for Exceptional Children Webinar, Teaching Special Education Online During COVID-19. While most students are returning to classrooms, the strategies for online instruction apply equally to onsite teaching. There is also an article on the great work being done at Como Secondary College as well as tools and resources to support students with Type 1 diabetes and information on AASE events.

We have a special event on Thursday this week for Autistic Pride Day, with young adults presenting an online seminar on their experiences of transitions, creating calm learning environments, and supporting students on the spectrum. This is a free event and the registration details are available in this newsletter. The focus on transitions in this event also links in with a recent article in the Australasian Journal of Special and Inclusive Education, which you receive free as a member of AASE, titled Students with Autism and Intellectual Disabilities in Inclusive Settings: The Nexus Between Recommended and Actual Practice.

As I mentioned in one of last year's newsletters, the Australian government established the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability. Details about this process are available at <https://disability.royalcommission.gov.au/>. The Royal Commission is currently collecting feedback on Restrictive Practices and First Nations People with Disability. If you would like to contribute to the information and discussion on either or both of these issues the details are at <https://disability.royalcommission.gov.au/publications/restrictive-practices-issues-paper> and <https://disability.royalcommission.gov.au/publications/first-nations-people-disability-issues-paper> respectively.

I hope the rest of your term goes well for you personally and professionally.

Dr Susan Main

President WA Chapter, AASE



WESTERNKIDSHEALTH

### AASE PD | Optimising participation at school for children with invisible illnesses with Emily Bruining.

by Rachael Jones

AASE WA extends our sincere gratitude to **Emily Bruining** from **Western Kids Health** for presenting a fantastic professional learning session on supporting children with invisible illnesses in the classroom. Thank you also to Cannington Community ESC for hosting the event.

The irony of 'invisible illnesses' during the developing COVID-19 crisis in WA was not lost on us! Nevertheless, we kept calm and carried on, given there were no restrictions in place (at the time) and given we had enough space to adhere to social distancing "guidelines". It seems a bit surreal looking back. For many of us, it was the last face-to-face event we attended in a 2 month period.

In her PD, Emily explored the connection between the physical and mental well-being of children with chronic conditions such as hypermobility, arthritis, chronic abdominal pain, headaches and fatigue. It was clear that anxiety linked to these conditions also plays a role in preventing students from participating at school. Emily presented strategies that promote resilience and confidence, including modifying expectations and supporting students in practical ways.

## NCCD | Supporting Students with Disability

by Kate Stannard

In 2019 the Australian Government unveiled an updated website to support the Nationally Consistent Collection of Data on School Students with Disability (NCCD) process.

The website <https://www.nccd.edu.au/> takes schools through the year-round best practice process for completion of the NCCD and is packed full of clear examples, resources and pointers for NCCD school teams.

One of the resources that is available and of great value is the set of e-learning units which have been uploaded and are free to use. These units cover professional learning on how to meet the obligations of the Disability Discrimination Act (1992) and the Disability Standards for Education (2005) and have been modified to support education staff who work with all ages and stages of students. The modules unpack the core content of the legislation while looking at the practical application of the Standards across a student's educational journey. They are also credited towards teachers' professional learning hours.





Opportunities for members include a bursary to attend the **2021** AASE National Conference in Adelaide, the AASE WA Award for exemplary practice, a quarterly newsletter, and members only prices for AASE PD's.

If you haven't already done so, **PLEASE PAY YOUR 2019/20 MEMBERSHIP**

## AASE Award Winner | Lara Hosking

by Lara Hosking

As a mature aged student and mother of three, I was terrified by the prospect of studying at ECU. I was worried that I had taken on too much and wouldn't be able to keep up; that I would never have a good understanding of the content that was being taught; and that referencing would forever remain a foreign language. My concerns, however, did not last long. As I progressed through my studies, I not only kept up with the coursework, but out of interest did extra reading and research. The content was presented in a way that challenged my thinking and strengthened the philosophies I held regarding the way children learn and the type of teacher I want to be. As for referencing, there is no doubt that it is still a foreign language, but it is a language that I now consider myself fluent in.

Throughout my studies, I learned the importance of developing my student's passion for learning and to instil in them a thirst for knowledge and the skills needed to become lifelong learners. I think it is safe to say I have learned from some amazing educators as the lecturers and teaching staff at ECU succeeded in doing this for me. Today I am passionate about education and in particular Special Needs and as I begin my first teaching position in a Special Needs School, I am thankful for the foundation ECU has laid. I am sure my learning journey has only just begun.



# Diabetes in Schools | Tools and resources to support students with Type 1 diabetes

by Julie Halvorson

The Diabetes in Schools program encourages families, schools and health professionals to work together to support students to manage their type 1 diabetes in schools.

The program provides access to a range of tools, resources, information and support to help parents and schools better understand how to support students with type 1 diabetes while at school.

It also offers a free, easily accessible online training program for all schools across the country. Over the coming months, face-to-face practical school training provided by qualified health professionals will also be available for schools that have students who are newly diagnosed with type 1 diabetes or who may require support to administer insulin.

The program provides 3 levels of training for schools:

- Level 1 Introductory training is designed for all school staff and provides basic information about supporting students with type 1 diabetes while at school. The training includes three short online modules. It's recommended all staff undertake level 1 training.
- Level 2 Intermediate training is designed for designated school staff who volunteer to be directly involved in supporting students with type 1 diabetes. Training is available via nine



online modules (for all schools) or via group education workshops (in some states). Training covers type 1 diabetes and food, monitoring glucose levels, insulin, managing lows and highs, physical activity, school camps and planning for changes. Training is general and is not specific to the needs of individual students.

- Level 3 Individualised Skills training is designed for designated school staff and focuses on the individual student's type 1 diabetes management. This practical face-to-face training is delivered in the school by a qualified healthcare professional (where possible this will be a member of the student's diabetes treating team). This will be available in some states from March 2020 and will be prioritised for schools with students who are newly diagnosed or who are unable to self-administer insulin.

## Portal

- Please register on the portal to complete the modules  
<https://www.diabetesinschools.com.au/>

## Action Plans

Diabetes WA and Perth Children Hospital Diabetes Services have developed a suite of diabetes action and management plans for the use in all educational settings. These have been endorsed by the Department of Education Western Australia.

# Targeted interventions | A lifeline for students at educational risk and with special education needs



**By Jessica Colleu Terradas**

A successful school intervention can disrupt the pipeline from social disadvantage to prison. As a secondary special education teacher of at-risk students, some of whom are clients of the juvenile justice system, I have seen the value of targeted intervention in action. Many of these students experience literacy failure early, their issues compound and often result in disengagement from school and anti-social behaviour. However, there is good news: research has shown that brain plasticity extends into the first years of secondary school, which means that if teachers identify misconceptions and other barriers to learning, students can catch up with their peers. I feel I have a moral obligation to ensure my students leave school, with the basic knowledge and skills

needed to secure a job or go on to further study.

The latest PISA results have confirmed that secondary schools are not doing enough to achieve a functional level of literacy and numeracy in at-risk adolescents. From 2000 to 2008, mean reading literacy scores dropped from 528 to 503, the equivalent of a year's learning. In Mathematical numeracy, Australia's mean score dropped from 524 in 2003 to 491 in 2018. This is a wake-up call. In response, Como Secondary College has implemented a program aiming to explicitly teach and accelerate the learning of students at educational risk. In 2016, the Principal Digby Mercer created the Intensive Learning Team (ILT) consisting of two specialist teachers (Kate Reid and myself) and an Education Assistant (Jane Keehn), managed

by program coordinator Mileva Tubbs. Structuring the program like this ensures continuity, as it is possible to induct new team members, whether to replace people who move on to different opportunities, or to expand to meet growing need. A key approach of the program is to have students experience success, leading to the achievement of much higher rates of progress. By ensuring they are conscious of their own improvement, students are enabled to shift their mindset and learn to connect success with effort, which has positive impacts on their wellbeing beyond the classroom.

Back in 2009, Como Secondary College started screening incoming Year 8 (then Year 7 in 2015) using Progressive Achievement Test (PAT) scores to ascertain their levels of achievement; they found that as many as 15% lacked literacy and numeracy skills to access the secondary curriculum. Typically, these students have repeatedly failed to learn to read over a prolonged period of time, often years; they are at least four years behind their peers at the end of Year 6, sit in the bottom 20 percentile rank in the ACER PAT and have failed previous NAPLAN tests. Often there are other complicating factors to do with family life and socioeconomic background.

The ILT runs an intensive, highly structured, evidence-based literacy and numeracy



intervention program to target the points of educational need for each student. The school uses Corrective Reading, Spelling Mastery and Connecting Maths Concepts SRA programs along with explicit direct instruction teaching methods because these incorporate the principles of effective instruction and have been shown to be highly effective in long scale evaluation such as Project Follow Through.

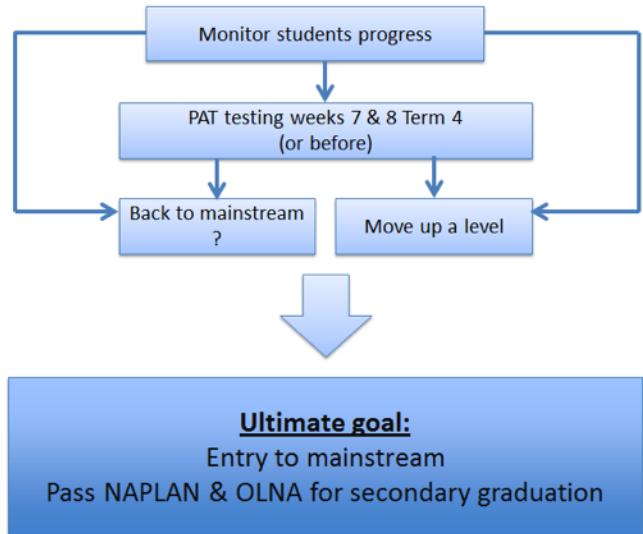
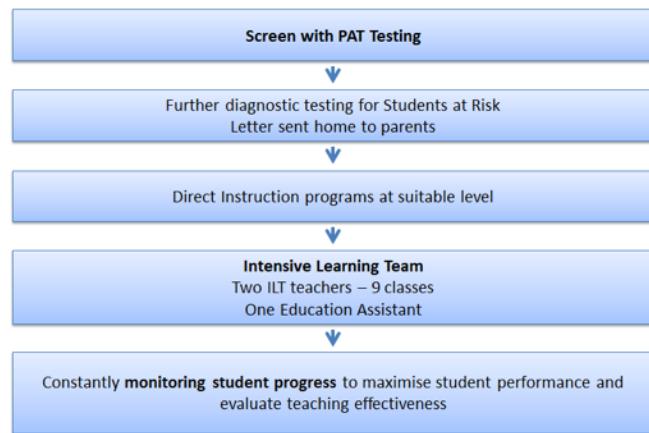
The program is designed to give the students immediate and ongoing success by minimising misconceptions and the chance of failure. Based onto the « I do, we do, you do » gradual release model, the teacher first demonstrates and practises with the students until they master the concept or skill being learned. The goal is to have students able to do the

work independently. The teacher needs to break the learning into sub-tasks to reduce cognitive load and set tasks that are neither too easy nor too hard. It must be at the right level of difficulty for students to be challenged while experiencing success too. In other words, the task should be both challenging and attainable. This approach also demands a high level of student engagement so students cannot avoid work and cannot fly under the radar. A systematic, fast-paced, and explicit model of instruction, implemented with fidelity, is critical to accelerate struggling students in secondary school.

Students are typically removed from their usual class for small group instruction (up to 15 per class), in which they participate until they can learn alongside their peers. The students do the reading and numeracy components during their normal English or Maths periods. The spelling/writing program is usually done during Science or Social Studies periods. We don't force the issue but most parents and students choose to do the spelling program. We have found that when students do go back into the regular Science or Social Studies classes they have not been disadvantaged and may even perform a bit better than might have been the case because their literacy has improved.

Approximately 50 students from Year 7 to 10 participate in the ILT classes every year. Progress is carefully monitored to ensure an average of two years' growth in one year of intervention. Many students demonstrate three to five years' progress in the same amount of time. Students graduate from the ILT better able to cope with the literacy and numeracy demands of mainstream classes. A number of them who were at least four years behind their peers at the end of Year 6 have gone on to successfully complete the Western Australian Online Literacy and Numeracy Assessment (OLNA) in Year 10, demonstrating their improvement was no flash in the pan but real, sustained gain. I have the example of an Aboriginal girl who arrived barely able to read. She went on to attain functional literacy and won a vocational prize. She has since been employed full-time by Qantas. We also had our first student gain entry to university in 2018.

## ILT Processes



The best thing is seeing the effect on the lives of students, who might otherwise have disengaged and dropped out, never having the opportunity to explore what they could achieve.

This initiative has attracted considerable interest from schools across WA and interstate with teachers willing to see the program in action. The ILT has developed a reputation for meeting the educational needs of students with learning difficulties. Many schools use Como's ILT as a model for implementing their own evidence-based literacy and numeracy intervention.



In 2019, I was named one of 12 fellows to receive the national Commonwealth Bank Teaching Award in recognition of my success in improving literacy and numeracy outcomes in at-risk students, which was awarded in partnership with Schools Plus. Committed to help close the education gap, this philanthropic organisation especially advances the education of students in need by supporting schools in low-socio economic areas, including more than 4,600 schools across Australia. As part of the Fellowship program, my school received a \$30,000 prize that allowed me to fund an innovative school project called 'Research To Classroom' (RTC), launched mid last year. The RTC project aims to build teacher capacity and improve students' engagement and performance by exploring cognitive psychology and its educational implications for the classroom.

I believe teachers cannot make informed decisions about effective teaching approaches or tools to use if they do not first understand how students learn. To understand how our students learn we must understand how their brains take in, process and retrieve information as well as the numerous factors that affect these processes. Thus, nine teachers volunteered to implement and embed effective learning review practices into every lesson to maximise students' retention, recall and integration of information – in other words to make sure they learn as much as possible, and retain that knowledge as long as possible. Acting as an instructional coach to my colleagues, I make myself available for teachers to facilitate feedback and support change.

This initiative has developed trust between the team members, allowing us to



investigate connections between observation data, changes in teaching practice and professional renewal, always focusing on the core purpose of teaching: student learning. It has also revealed how incredibly difficult it is to change our practice as teachers and learn new skills, reminding us what it feels like to be a student.

Do you find reviewing previously learnt content at the start of the lesson useful in helping you to remember what you have learnt? Why or why not?

*Yes, it certainly does. It refreshes my memory of the methods / processes, and I find that the rest of the questions are much easier to do after reviewing/revising the work.*

Do you find reviewing previously learnt content at the start of the lesson useful in helping you to remember what you have learnt? Why or why not?

*I think it is awesome. Most times with maths especially you can forget content very easily so reviewing having that little bit of a reminder helps keeps [unclear] when asked?*

Modifying practice requires making a deliberate decision to make a change and then to persist with it until our default mode and habits shift. Each member has shown a great commitment to trial, improve their teaching practices and positive feedback was collected from students. I strongly believe in rising to the challenge of meeting high standards of achievement. I remain committed to ensuring that all students, including those with learning difficulties or from typically disadvantaged backgrounds, gain access to high-quality education suited to their needs.

## References

1. June 23<sup>rd</sup> 2020, Webinar: An exploration of Instructional Coaching to build teachers' capacity in schools, hosted by Dyslexia Association of Singapore as part of the UNITE SPLD 2020 conference  
Link: <https://sites.google.com/das.org.sg/unitespld2020/programme/day-1-2?authuser=0>
2. August 26<sup>th</sup> 2020, Webinar : Best practices in literacy and numeracy interventions for older struggling students in secondary schools, hosted by Australian curriculum Studies Association Inc. as part of ACSA Webinars: <https://www.acsa.edu.au/pages/page770.asp>



BIO: Jessica Colleu Terradas won the 2019 Commonwealth Bank Teaching Award in recognition of her success in improving literacy and numeracy outcomes in at-risk students. She runs a targeted intervention for struggling adolescents at Como Secondary College in Western Australia. As Special Education specialist, Level 3CT and instructional coach, Jessica has been instrumental in advancing the awareness, understanding and use of evidence-based instruction to prevent low numeracy and literacy failures across the state and beyond. Being a sought-after advisor to more than 40 other secondary schools, she continues to impart her knowledge by assisting schools with timetabling, screening processes, recruitment and teacher training.

## AUTISTIC PRIDE DAY | AASE WA Panel Discussion

Exciting news! AASE WA Chapter is hosting a free Panel Discussion (via Zoom) for Autistic Pride Day. Our national patron, Chris Varney (from I CAN Network), has organised for 4 young people to discuss their personal experiences with regards to transitions, creating calm learning environments, and supporting students on the spectrum. The four young people joining us on 18th June at 3.30pm AWST are:

### Lana Wheatfill

Lana is a proud 18-year-old Autistic woman who studies at Monash University and is employed to mentor Autistic students at the I CAN Network.

### Isaac De Gabrielle

Isaac is a 16-year-old Autistic student leader who is a trainee mentor in St James College's (East Bentleigh, Melbourne) I CAN Network program.

### Patrick Elander

Patrick is a 19-year-old Autistic man who is a Network Leader in the I CAN Network.

### Madi Kenna

Madi is a 18-year-old Autistic advocate who is a Mentor in the I CAN Network Online Group Mentoring Program.



## AASE WA PANEL DISCUSSION Autistic Pride Day

**Moderator: Chris Varney, AASE National Patron**

AASE WA will be hosting a FREE panel discussion (via Zoom) for Autistic Pride Day.

The AASE national patron, Chris Varney from the I CAN Network, has arranged for four young people to talk about their experiences in relation to a number of topics including:

- How their Autism has helped them achieve with their interests.
- What schools did to support them during their teenage years.
- What made their transition to high school and post-high school successful.
- What advice they would give a Year 7 teacher trying to create a calm learning environment for an Autistic Year 7 student.

18th June 3:30 pm - 5:30 pm (AWST)  
via Zoom

Click [here](#) to register and receive the Zoom link.

Click [here](#) to register and receive the Zoom link.  
18th June 3:30 pm - 5:30 pm (AWST)

# Teaching Special Education Online During COVID-19

## Council for Exceptional Children (CEC)

By Associate Professor Dianne Chambers

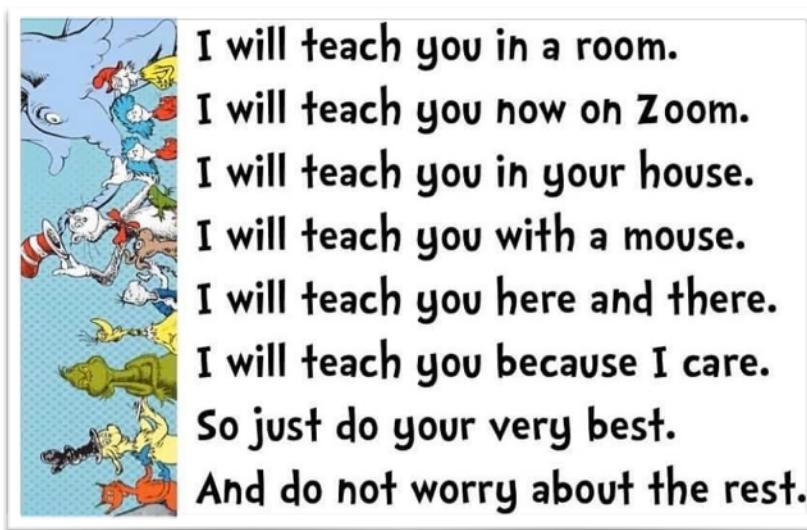
As a special educator I was interested in the webinar by the CEC in the USA on teaching students with special needs online during the COVID restrictions (19th March 2020). Although we are now moving out of this approach, it is important to take note of what works in the online environment. A number of aspects in the webinar that reflected good teaching practices were highlighted, including:

- You are not alone! - An important thing for teachers to remember is that everyone is going through the same uncertainties and situations.
- Technology - Key resources needed: laptop or desktop computer, headset, high-speed internet connection, software (i.e. Zoom, Google Meet, Webex)
- Set up your workspace - Try to find an appropriate space to work, with no distractions behind you. Get a comfortable chair! Create a schedule.
- Self-care - Dress professionally, use socks (for cold feet), give yourself a break, look away from the screen regularly for a period of time to give your eyes a rest.



- Communication - Determine how often and when you will be online with families/parents and students. Have 'video office hours'. Document the interactions and track progress of students. Consider the individual needs of students/parents (difficulties with print, vision impairment) when communicating. Use choice boards where possible.
- Collaborate - Have coffee with colleagues, or touch base over Zoom (or similar). It is important to keep professional and collegial contact
- Conducting sessions - Provide instructions to the student/family in advance and provide details on how to join a session. Send reminders, prepare materials in advance (if possible), and send follow-up activities.
- Strategies for online instruction - Engage with students (with enthusiasm and expression), set clear expectations, create a supportive environment (use existing tools -such as class dojo), foster relationships and make it fun (make a personal connection), use a mix of readily available tools (TEDEd, Scholastic, News-to-you, google forms, Seesaw, Flipgrid, ReadTheory, TATE kids, etc), use breakout rooms (individual or groups), learning in small chunks, provide feedback.
- No internet - Not all students have access to high-speed internet, so consider how to use similar or the same activities/instructions that can be sent home. Low and no-tech options are needed.
- Adjust - Adjust and modify lessons in response to the students/parents' feedback.
- Be patient - Everyone is learning!

If you wish to watch the entire webinar, it is available from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PaAzagd13hE&feature=youtu.be>.



## Research Participation Request | FPNSW

Are you a **person with intellectual disability or autism spectrum disorder?**

Are you a **parent or carer of a person with intellectual disability or autism spectrum disorder?**

**We want to hear from you!**

*Share your experiences and knowledge, and help us create a resource to help parents and carers of children with disability proactively support their child through puberty.*

## About the project

Family Planning NSW is starting an exciting new nation-wide project! It aims to assist parents and carers to support their child through puberty by providing them with access to an interactive online platform with the latest information, resources and strategies for supporting their growing children.

## Who do we need?

- ♦ **Adults** with intellectual disability and/or autism spectrum disorder
- ♦ **Parents** and carers of children with intellectual disability and/or autism spectrum disorder

## How can you be involved?

**Complete a survey** - Parents and carers can click on the link below and complete an online survey. <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/W85R3WG>

**Phone interview** - If you have a lot of information you want to share with us you can take part in a phone interview. Email [disability@fpnsw.org.au](mailto:disability@fpnsw.org.au)

*Your answers will help us design a resource that provides parents and carers with information they need and want.*

### A little thank you gift...

Complete the online survey and enter a draw to win a \$20 gift voucher.

Phone interview participants will receive a \$20 gift voucher.

If you have any questions or would like further information about the project email [disability@fpnsw.org.au](mailto:disability@fpnsw.org.au)

Thank you,

*The Family Planning NSW team*

## AASE WA Executive & Committee 2020

### Executive

|                 |                 |  |
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