

# My Experience As the International Teacher In Residence 2002-2003

BY SARAH YONG, SINGAPORE

On the 24th of September 2002, I arrived at the BRIDGE SCHOOL in California to spend a full school year as the International Teacher In Residence. The Bridge School is an institution devoted to empowering children with complex communication needs to achieve their full potential through the use of Augmentative and Alternative Communication and Assistive Technology. The International Teacher award is a biennial collaboration with ISAAC, and provides the individual the opportunity to spend a school year training at the Bridge School as well as to travel to various conferences and network with individuals involved in the area of AAC.

My experience as the Teacher In Residence was a very memorable one. My year started with the ISAAC Denmark 2002 conference, I got to meet many individuals from the interna-

tional AAC world. One of the highlights of the conference was meeting many people from the AAC Emerging Countries, and to be inspired by their passion to promote AAC despite some very difficult circumstances!

During my year at Bridge School I was able to explore the latest theoretical knowledge and practical skills in the area of AAC. This included the opportunity to try and learn to operate many of the latest devices, AAC/ AT equipment and software. Besides training with the staff, I had the opportunity to travel to several places in the USA, to attend AAC/ AT conferences and visit AAC centres. One unexpected opportunity was attending an AAC Master's level class at San Francisco State University with Dr. Gloria Soto. During the year I had opportunities to meet, discuss issues, seek guidance and share ideas with many internationally renowned



*Sarah, Peter and Cristian having a serious conversation.*

people involved in AAC. My year ended with the Bridge School Building Bridges Camp. During this camp 40+ people who use AAC were often found laughing, playing and learning together! Again, a testimony to the fact that AAC is empowering!

My year has taught me much more than just the latest trends and research in AAC. It has reinforced the fact that AAC is about empowering the individual to communicate and achieve his/ her full potential. I have also been inspired by the passion of those in the AAC field and their belief that AAC makes a difference. I hope some of this has rubbed off on me, as I work to make inroads in my part of the world!

Finally, to all at Bridge School and the rest of the AAC world who have so generously shared their knowledge, expertise, ideas with me – I would like to say a BIG "Thank you"! I have definitely learned a lot and had fun.

And I hope the next Teacher In Residence enjoys his/her year as much as I did. If you would like to know more about this award, check the awards page on the ISAAC website.



*Sarah, Sam, Nancy and Ria are working together at circle time.*