

AAC for every kid! Creating an inclusive communicative pre-school environment using the ComPAL-model

ComPAL - COMmunication using Point-talking in an Aided Learning environment - is an intervention model that comprises both staff training and provision of ready-made materials to use within the frames of Point-talking (Jonsson, Kristoffersson, Ferm & Thunberg, 2011) or aided language stimulation (Goossens', 1998). The content in ComPAL builds upon the parental education AKKtiv (Early Intervention and Augmentative and Alternative Communication) hat was developed during the 2000's in Sweden and now is being spread in Sweden, Norway, Croatia and several other countries also being interested (Ferm, Andersson, Broberg, Liljegren & Thunberg, 2011). Both AKKtiv and ComPAL is in line with research and current theories in regard to communication development and communication intervention for children at early communicative stages (Branson & Demcak, 2009; Thunberg, 2014). The three basic pillars are: 1) responsive communication 2) Environmental milieu teaching strategies and 3) multimodal AAC and aided language stimulation practices. The basic idea is that the strategies, including AAC, are developed and used generally for and to ALL children in a group, all along the lines of universal design put forth in the UN convention for persons with disability (2006). During the six two-hour sessions the educational staff learn about:

- 1) Communication, communicative rights and AAC according to the UN conventions and discussions using the Communication Bill of Rights (REF),
- 2) Communication development and responsive communication strategies
- 3) Play/activity and milieu teaching strategies
- 4) AAC and vocabulary
- 5) Workshop developing own materials in a communication app or software/webb-resource such as Boardmaker or www.bildstod.se
- 6) Follow up, plans for the future and evaluation activiites including a short introduction to Talking Mats.

All sessions, besides five, includes lectures, exercises and discussions mainly out of the assignments that are given between each session.

The ComPAL intervention model was first developed for school-aged children with severe communicative disabilities, mainly autism and intellectual disability. A pilot evaluation done on four special schools showed promising results with respect to the perceptions and perceived changes reported by staff and parents (Widstam & Wallin, 2010). Already during the development phase of ComPAL there was an interest to use the model in Pre-schools. The situation in Sweden, as in many other counties today, is that almost all children with disabilities are included in ordinary pre-school groups. This means that most pre-schools have children with some kind of communicative disability, with or without identified diagnoses, in their groups. Beside these children they also have children that are communicatively vulnerable due to other reasons, for example that they have problems with the Swedish language or that they are young and have problems understanding routines and expressing themselves.

During this presentation we will describe how the ComPAL model has been adapted to and used in inclusive pre-school environments in Sweden and Croatia. The intervention package: staff training course, educational materials including video clips and the communication books and boards developed, will be demonstrated. The materials have also been interpreted into English. We will share our experiences, including video-examples, from pre-schools in both countries. Due to the refugee and immigrant situation in both of our countries the interest and need for the ComPAL-intervention has increased.

References:

Branson, D., Demchak, M. (2009). The use of Augmentative and Alternative Communication Methods with Infants and Toddlers with Disabilities: A Research Review. *Augmentative and Alternative Communication* 2009; 25 274-286.

Ferm, U., Andersson, M., Broberg, M., Liljegren, T., & Thunberg, G. (2011). Parents and course leaders' experiences of the ComAlong augmentative and alternative communication early intervention course. *Disability Studies Quarterly: Mediated Communication*, 31(4) <http://dsq-sds.org>

Jonsson, A., Kristoffersson, L., Ferm, U., & Thunberg, G. (2011). The ComAlong communication boards: Parents' use and experiences of aided language stimulation. *Augmentative and Alternative Communication*, 27(2), 103-116.

Thunberg, G. (2013). Early Communication Intervention for Children with Autism Spectrum Disorders, *Recent Advances in Autism Spectrum Disorders - Volume I*, Prof. Michael Fitzgerald (Ed.), ISBN: 978-953-51-1021-7, InTech, DOI: 10.5772/54881. Available from: <http://www.intechopen.com/books/recent-advances-in-autism-spectrum-disorders-volume-i/early-communication-intervention-for-children-with-autism-spectrum-disorders>



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Course Title:

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Program Planner/Instructional Personnel's Name: GENNIFER THUNBERG

Course Title: AAC for every child! Creating an inclusive classroom every child!

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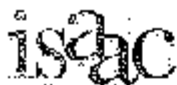
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Program Planner/Instructional Personnel's Name: HELENA MOLLER-LOVÉN

Course Title: ABC FOR EVERY YLD! CREATING...

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Signature: Helena Moller-Loven

Date: 20-May-2014
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Program Planner/Instructional Personnel's Name: LEJUN KOGAN

Course Title: Are you ready? Creating an inclusive learning environment using (conf)

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Signature Lejun Kogan

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