

Editorial

I have just returned from the Annual National Conference of AASE that was held in Hobart in conjunction with the Tasmanian Principals Association State Conference. The focus of the conference was dealing with challenging behaviour, and more particularly positive and proactive approaches to this issue. The major keynote speaker, George Sugai, over a sequence of addresses and workshops provided a good overview of research-based, proactive approaches to problem behaviour. The particular focus was on positive behaviour supports in a whole school context and functional assessment of problem behaviour at the level of the individual student. This work has a strong foundation in Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA), which has always been one of the key theoretical approaches underpinning effective special education practice. Although ABA is not kindly regarded by many academics and mainstream educators, the research evidence presented by Dr Sugai showed that the application of its basic principles, such as the provision of reinforcing consequences for appropriate behaviour of students and teachers and the identification of the reinforcers for problem behaviour, provides a means to build proactive supports for problem behaviour and to design effective interventions for problem behaviour. The presentations by Dr Sugai to a mixed audience of special educators, school principals, parents and others was a positive aspect of the conference and a reminder that applied behaviour analysis and special education have much to offer regular educators.

The success of proactive programs of positive behaviour support in reducing problem behaviour in schools enrolling students of all ages and in many different areas of the USA

should be considered by Australian schools. We must recognise that while there is always likely to be a small number of students who will require more intensive interventions, their number can be minimised by positive approaches in preference to the zero-tolerance punitive and reactive strategies favoured by politicians. Those who were unable to attend the conference can find further information at www.pbis.org and www.swis.org.

This issue of the journal contains five papers. Three discuss issues around assessment for students with special education needs. Ian Dempsey and Bob Conway discuss, from an Australian perspective, the participation of students with disabilities in national testing and the needed accommodations. Diane Browder and her colleagues discuss, from an American perspective, alternative assessment and access to the regular curriculum for students with high support needs. Still within the sphere of assessment, Anastasia Anderson and Kevin Wheldall provide a thorough review of research studies on self-monitoring by students with disabilities. Sally Howell and Coral Kemp provide an interesting critique of the concept and role of "number sense" in relation to students who have difficulties in numeracy. They discuss the possible analogy between phonemic awareness and number sense, and conclude that unlike phonemic awareness, number sense remains poorly defined and we lack validated intervention procedures to develop number sense. Finally Harry Milne reports on a study of the factors that influence the development of musical talent in people with Williams Syndrome. The results are part of a larger study that applied models of talent development and school enrichment

developed for students without disabilities to people with Williams Syndrome. These people are typically seen as having limited cognitive skills, but appear to have a relative strength in musical ability. Once again we have an issue

that demonstrates the breadth of special education and the wide range of current issues in our field.

Jennifer Stephenson PhD

Special Issue

Inclusion and Secondary Schools

Manuscripts are invited for consideration for a special issue of AJSE (Volume 29, No 2 to be published in the second half of 2005). This issue will include a section under the guest editorship of Associate Professor Chris Forlin of Edith Cowan University on the inclusion of students with disabilities and/or special education needs in secondary schools. Manuscripts reporting outcomes of research studies, literature reviews and critical analysis of the issues around inclusion in secondary schools should be with the Guest Editor, AJSE, by January 31st 2005. Manuscripts should preferably be emailed as an attachment in Word format to c.forlin@ecu.edu.au or mailed prior to December 20th to:

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Please see the inside back cover for author guidelines.