Early Intervention in the 21st Century

WEDNESDAY 2 DECEMBER 2015

DR KATHY COLOGON, INSTITUTE OF EARLY CHILDHOOD, MACQUARIE UNIVERSITY

FACILITATING INCLUSION IN EARLY CHILDHOOD THROUGH THE USE OF KEY WORD SIGN

In this workshop, research with 196 pre-service teachers about using Key Word Sign as a form of AAC within early childhood settings is presented. The workshop will also incorporate hands on signing experiences as part of exploring this research study and implications and implementation in practice.

Participants in this research completed a Key Word Sign workshop within their university studies and developed ideas for implementing AAC into early childhood practice. Participants reported beliefs that Key Word Sign was important for supporting communication development, with a focus on language comprehension and expressive communication. Participants also reported perceived benefits of Key Word Sign for facilitating inclusive practices through: (a) reducing barriers and ensuring participation of all children; (b) accommodating for individual learning styles, including multi-modal and multi-sensory learning; (c) valuing diversity in children and diverse forms of communication; and (d) supporting a sense of belonging.

In implementing Key Word Sign, participants recommended its naturalistic and inclusive use within everyday learning experiences, such as play, literacy activities, small-group learning activities, and music and singing experiences. Also recommended was modelling of signs within the environment through everyday conversations, routines and transitions. The support of visual aids was recommended as an effective approach. Involving all staff and families and providing evidence-based and accessible information was perceived to be important for successful implementation of AAC.

Prior to entering academia, Kathy worked in mainstream school and prior to school settings and developed and implemented early intervention and inclusive early childhood programs. In these roles, Kathy collaborated with families, teachers and therapists to support the inclusion of young children who experience disability. In her research, Kathy continues to work closely with families, early childhood professionals and policy makers across a range of different services in Australia and across the Asia-Pacific region and beyond.

BIOGRAPHY

Dr Kathy Cologon lectures in Inclusive Early Childhood Education at the Institute of Early Childhood, Macquarie University. Kathy has a particular interest in research and practice relating to the development and support of inclusive education, with a view towards greater recognition of the rights of all children.

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W: mq.edu.au/research/cfrc/news_and_events/cfrc_conferences/
E: genevieve.godwin@mq.edu.au
T: (02) 9850 9621, F: (02) 9850 8254