First Nations Special Education
CONNECTIONS

Working with First Nations students in BC?

Have special education questions?

Call the Resource Line!

The Resource Line is a free service for BC educators and parents.

It can help you brainstorm approaches, guide you toward helpful resources, help you to understand assessment documents, and let you know about the latest information on special education.

When you call or email, you will reach the Resource Line Coordinator, Holly Smith. Holly is available to answer your questions, Monday to Thursday, 12:30 to 4:30 during the school year

Contact the Resource Line:

Toll-free 1-877-547-1919

hollys@fnesc.ca

Connections is the monthly newsletter of the Resource Line. Back issues of *Connections* are available from:

www.fnsa.ca/resource-line.htm

The Resource Line is a collaborative project of the First Nations Education Steering Committee (FNESC) and the First Nations Schools Association (FNSA), made possible thanks to financial assistance from Indian and Northern Affairs Canada.

Winter is fast approaching, in fact, we have snow here in the north! I hope everyone has their snow tires on.

This month's Connections provides a little something for everyone with topics ranging from visual schedules to improving readers' fluency. Many links are provided to online resources, but if you need a print copy of an article or another website item, contact me!

Holly Smith

Special Education Resource Line Coordinator

Enlightening Reading

Visual Schedules

"When I see it, then I understand"

Almost all students can benefit from a visual schedule. A visual schedule illustrates a sequence of planned events using symbols (objects, pictures or text) easily recognized by the target student. Students who could benefit the most often display one or more of the following behaviours when given verbal commands:

- Does not follow directions
- Stares back with no comprehension
- Appears to not be listening
- Walks away
- Continues with current activity

The following websites provide information on the importance of visual schedules, components of visual schedules, tips for creating effective visual schedules, and reasons to maintain them.

Visual Schedules, Environmental Interventions Learning Module from ICAN http://www.editurl.com/4so

The following three articles are from the Provincial Outreach Program for Autism and Related Disorders.

Visual Schedules: What They Are and How to Use Them.
www.autismoutreach.ca/resources/resources

30 Reasons to Use and to Keep Using a Visual Schedule, by Margaret Brown
www.autismoutreach.ca/assets/30visual.pdf

Read Pointers for Success with Visual Schedules, by Margaret Brown
www.autismoutreach.ca/assets/pointers.pdf

Phonemic Awareness

Article 3 in the Oral Language Series
by Guest Contributor:
Ben Perry, FNESC/FNSA Speech/Language Therapist

What Is Phonemic Awareness?

If I were to say a word slowly, stretching it out, so that each letter sound came by itself (e.g. "c...a...t" or "th...i...r...s...t...y"), most people reading this article could figure out what word I said. This is because of a skill we learned in school that lets us sound out a printed word. The skill is called *phoneme blending*. Each of the letter sounds is called a phoneme, and the ability to put them together and take them apart in words is called phonemic awareness.

It turns out that quite a few children who are having difficulty with reading have a weakness in phonemic awareness. Luckily, phonemic awareness training has been shown to be one of the most effective interventions for struggling readers.

Teaching Phonemic Awareness

Teaching phonemic awareness starts with the whole classroom. This skill may be picked up by students during lessons that involve "sounding out" written words. Teachers also address this skill when teaching alphabet sounds and asking students to think about the starting sounds of words. Some students will need more intensive instruction in this area.

A good place to start is assessment to determine which students are falling behind their peers in phonemic awareness skills. Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) provides benchmarks for development of this ability in the kindergarten and grade one tests, which can also be used for older students. There are other ways to test for phonemic awareness, such as The Phonological Awareness Profile, which is available from www.linguisystems.com.

Once you have figured out which students need additional support for phonemic awareness development, you can start using a variety tools. There are a few characteristics of effective phonemic awareness tools. First, they focus almost exclusively on segmenting and blending phonemes in words. Second, they start with basic words that have 2 or 3 phonemes and progress from there to words with more phonemes. Finally, they start without using any letters of the alphabet, and end up integrating the alphabet in the end.

Phonemic Awareness Teaching Tools

There are a number of ready-made tools for teaching phonemic awareness. A free and complete curriculum is available at www.freereading.net. This program is designed for small groups and has simple, engaging ideas for young learners.

A more complete basic program is *The Phonological Awareness Kit* from www.linguisystems.com.

For students who are not responding to either of these programs, a more involved program, *Lindamood Phoneme Sequencing Program* (LIPs) is also available from www.linguisystems.com. LIPS is complicated to teach, but it has been successful with students who have difficulty learning their letter sounds as well as phonemic awareness.

Finally, there are some computer programs that target phonemic awareness. *Earobics* and *FastForWord* programs also target some basic listening abilities.

Big Ideas in Beginning Reading provides research-based recommendations for teaching reading http://www.editurl.com/525. There are videos of instructional techniques for phonemic awareness as well as tips on how to assess and target students for this skill. The Big Ideas website reminds us that phonemic awareness is an important component, but not the whole picture of a reading program.

Phonological awareness is an important part of wider cognitive development. Recent research has suggested that it helps to organize the words inside a person's head (much like a dictionary organizes words alphabetically). It can also be a rewarding skill to teach, since student progress is very visible and leads to great gains in literacy ability.

If you want any support in developing a phonemic awareness program at your school or preschool, please contact FNESC special education department or email me at benp@fnesc.ca.

Useful Websites

Sensory Processing Disorder Center

http://www.editurl.com/4sn

We receive and perceive sensory input through sights, sounds, touch, tastes, smells and movement. Difficulty taking in or interpreting this input can lead to devastating consequences in:

- daily functioning
- social and family relationships

- behavioural challenges
- regulating emotions
- self-esteem
- learning

Take some time to explore this site to learn about some of the sensory processing issues and to find the reasons why this apparent "chaos" actually makes perfect sense. Through this site, you will finally begin to understand - or further understand, why your child/student does the things he/she does. Sensory Processing Disorder - also known as Sensory Integration Dysfunction - is still in the process of becoming widely accepted and treated by all professionals.

DIBELS: Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy

https://dibels.uoregon.edu/

Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy are a set of procedures and measures for assessing the acquisition of early literacy skills from kindergarten through sixth grade. They are short fluency measures used to monitor the development of early literacy and early reading skills. These quick assessments provide valuable information to help you with program planning and reporting. DIBELS materials are available for free download at http://dibels.uoregon.edu/. Madeline Price and Holly Smith of FNESC are also available for school visits to assist with implementing DIBELS assessments.

FNESC/FNSA Special Education Lending Library

The FNESC/FNSA Special Education Lending Library has many valuable resources for your work with First Nations students with special needs. Please note that the lending library is available to FNSA member schools only.

Browse through the library's special education materials online by visiting the website http://www.fnesc.org:88/. To request materials contact Patti Yamamoto at the FNESC office at P: 1-877-422-3672, F: 604-925-6097 or email pattiy@fnesc.ca.

Available through the Lending Library...

Six-Minute Solution:
A Reading Fluency Program
(For Grades 3-8 & Remedial High School)
By G Adam & S Brown

Fluency is the ability to read text accurately, quickly and with expression. It is a neglected reading skill!

Did you know that reading fluency improves

comprehension? Students with limited reading fluency read less text then their peers, and have less time to go over, remember and comprehend the text. Their energy is spent attempting to decode the text rather then comprehending, often resulting in the students being unable to retain the information.

The *Six-Minute Solution* shows you how to measure fluency rates, provides you with graded word lists and passages as well as tracking tools to use with your students.

It is an excellent support to ensure reading growth in all students. It can be used one-on-one with students, or as a classroom program that takes six minutes a day.

What Oral Reading Fluency Rates Are Desirable?

Gr.	Correct Words Per Minute
1	60-80
2	80-100
3	100-120
4-5	120-150
6-8	150-180
9-12	180-200

The FNESC/FNSA Special Education Team have seen examples of schools using this program very effectively and with good results. Call the Resource Line for more info on this program. 1-877-547-1919 Madeline and Holly are available to come to your First Nation school and provide a workshop on this reading fluency program.

REWARDS Reading Excellence: Word Attack and Rate Development Strategies
Archer, A., Gleason, M., & Vachon, V.

Give your older students a chance to master grade level material. This specialized reading program is designed to teach intermediate and secondary students a flexible strategy for decoding long words and to increase their oral and silent reading fluency. In 20 lessons, your intermediate and secondary students will:

- learn to decode multisyllabic words;

- learn to read multisyllabic words in content-area

textbooks;

- increase reading fluency, and much more!

The *REWARDS Teacher's Guide* and a 42-minute demonstration video are both available from the Lending Library.

Mark Your Calendars

November 19-21, Edmonton, Alberta. Mind Body Spirit Conference presented by LDAA - Learning Disabilities Association of Alberta. A continuing education opportunity for teachers, administrators, professionals, and parents on practical strategies and emerging research on learning disabilities. Featuring Dr. Scott Wooding, Dr. Robert Brooks, Dr. Linda Siegel as well as a host of other experts who will discuss approaches to intervention that focus on mind, body and spirit - recognizing that learning disabilities affect every aspect of a person's life. www.LDAA.ca

November 20, Vancouver. An Introduction to Sensory Processing in Children with ASD – Reaching a Common Understanding. What is sensory processing and why is it important? What does sensory dysfunction look like? How does it feel? What can be done to help your child? Mary-Ann Fulks is an occupational therapist with 20 years experience in pediatric practice and is a clinical faculty member of the School of Rehabilitation Sciences at UBC. Mary-Ann has received praise from audiences across BC for her balanced, insightful and thoughtful assessment of the role of sensory processing issues for children with ASD and their treatment. www.actcommunity.net/

November 21, Vancouver. Westcoast Child Care Resource Mini Conference: Inspiring Excellence in Child Care and Early Learning. www.editurl.com/4sm

November 30-December 4, Delta. Introduction to Autism Spectrum Disorders-Practical Applications (ASD). The training program includes practical hands-on training and application exercises of critical elements in teaching students with autism and ASD. www.autismoutreach.ca/training/course-calendar

December 7-10, Delta. Introduction to Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA). Completion of this course provides the participant an overview of ABA history and theory, but the emphasis will be on practical hands-on coaching and training. www.autismoutreach.ca/training/course-calendar

January 9, 16, 23 (3 Saturdays), Vancouver. Hands-On Training in Verbal Behaviour for Therapists. This workshop is designed to provide teachers, special education assistants, therapists and parents who serve as their child's primary therapist with guided practice in implementing Verbal Behaviour methodology – an approach to ABA illustrated with excellent video. You must have a background in ABA and understand the terminology of Verbal Behaviour to register for this workshop as it requires a significant amount of knowledge and practical experience. http://www.actcommunity.net/

January 11-15, Delta. Introduction to Autism Spectrum Disorders-Practical Applications (ASD). The program includes practical hands-on training through instructor demonstration and coaching and application exercises of key elements in teaching students with autism/ASD. http://www.autismoutreach.ca/training/course-calendar

January 18-21, Delta. Introduction to Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA). Completion of this course provides the participant an overview of ABA history and theory, but the emphasis will be on practical hands-on coaching and training. http://www.autismoutreach.ca/training/course-calendar

**See the 2009/2010 *Connections*
Professional Development Issue
on the FNSA website
for more opportunities...**
http://www.fnsa.ca/specialed.htm