

Pre-conference: Thursday, 2nd Dec 2010, 08.30 – 12.30 hrs

Communication Strategies for People with Autism Spectrum Disorders

Facilitator: Prof Carl Parsons

Prof Carl L Parsons has a Bachelor degree in Speech-Language Pathology & Audiology, a Master of Science in Education, and a PhD in Communication Sciences and Psychology. He worked at the State University of New York (Geneseo) and at Southern Illinois University before coming to Australia in 1980. He has a long history of working with children with autism spectrum disorders. In 1974 he worked on a project to teach students with ASD how to use a symbol system (Non-SLIP) to communicate.

In Australia, Dr Parsons has run multidisciplinary intensive treatment programs (camps) for families who have a child with autism spectrum disorder and he has published work on autism spectrum disorders. His research has centred on teaching augmentative communication, using computer programs to assist learning, and teaching social skills to people with ASD.

Prof Parsons was the Associate Dean (Research) Faculty of Health Sciences for over 10 years. He has been Head of the School of Human Communication Disorders, Head of the Multimedia Unit at LaTrobe University, and Head of the Department of Podiatry while at LaTrobe.

Currently, Dr Parsons is Director, Centre for Advanced Assessment and Therapy Services (CAATS), Director, Computer Assisted Therapy Services (CATS), Director, Integrated Services at Port Phillip Specialist School in Port Melbourne. At Port Phillip Specialist School he oversees the work of special education teachers, art therapist, dance therapist, drama therapist, music therapist, occupational therapist, physiotherapist, and speech-language therapist.

Dr Parsons is also the National Program Coordinator for the Andrew Dean Fildes Foundation for Language-Learning Disabilities. He runs programs in two states of Australia and involves numerous other disciplines and students from numerous universities in these programs. He is an Honorary Fellow, at the Assessment Research Centre, Faculty of Education, The University of Melbourne. He also lectures at the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT) and other University programs in Melbourne.

Prof Carl L Parsons is the Patron and Life Member for the Down Syndrome Association. He is consultant to numerous schools in Victoria for programs for students with Autism and Asperger's Syndrome. In 2007-2008 he was an adviser to the Victorian State Committee to review Services for Students with Autism Spectrum Disorders. Prof Parsons is keen to offer his knowledge to help families who have children with ASD.

Abstract:

Communication disorders are central to the diagnosis and problems associated with autism spectrum disorders. This presentation aims to summarise the types of communication problems people with autism have, discuss potential causes of these communication problems, and provide an overview of the various treatment techniques (strategies and programs) that have been used to improve communication skills in people with autism spectrum disorders. A number of these techniques will be explained and short videos of people with ASD will be shown and discussed. The various advantages and disadvantages of these techniques will be reviewed. The evidence base for the various treatments will be discussed. Parents and professionals will be encouraged to review the strategies they are using with people with ASD.