



# OPEN ACCESS RESOURCE CENTRE

ANNUAL AAC NEWSLETTER



## 2023 CONFERENCE RECAP

Read about our 2023 Conference where the audience learned more about AAC implementation.

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## GENEROUS DONORS

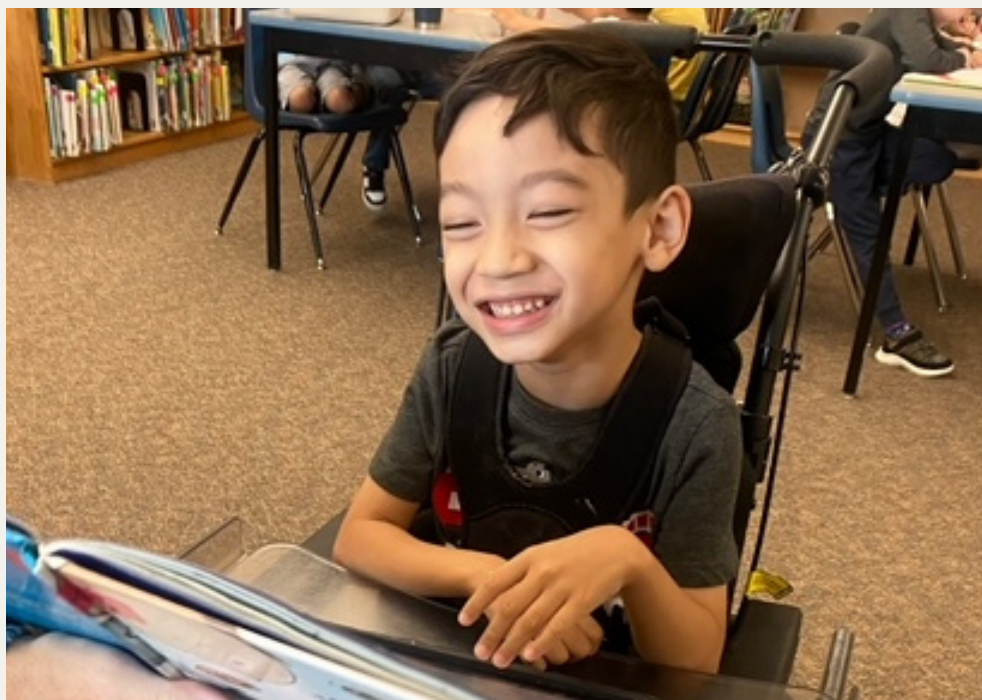
OARC is thankful for donations from private donors, and grants from Foundations & Corporations.

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## THANK YOU FOR YOUR PATIENCE!

Remotely managed communication devices!

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ANNUAL CONFERENCE



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2023



PLEASE SUPPORT KIDS WITH  
COMMUNICATION CHALLENGES  
AT OUR CANADA HELPS  
DONOR PAGE.

## Meet Yohann!



BY MARNIE LOEWEN

Yohann's mom, dad and Heritage School staff are all singing Yohann's praises for his brilliant use of technology to speak! Six-year old Yohann is using his iPad and Proloquo2Go app to communicate in four and five word sentences. His communication iPad is referred to as his "Talker". Jenn Tsouras is his speech-language pathologist and very excited about Yohann using exclamations like "wow" as he did when he entered the school gym set up with circus equipment. Jenn gave an example of Yohann's creativity and resourcefulness when he wrote out all the words for "Three Little Monkeys Jumping on the Bed" but he changed the words to reference his friend. When he hit the "speak" button he said "Three Little Aurora's Jumping on the Bed!"

Yohann's mom, Janneth, says he is a happy boy who has great interest in clocks and ceiling fans! Yohann has access to kids' YouTube on his play iPad and spells to search for what he wants to view. He enjoys watching a catchy broken ceiling fan song and taking photos of ceiling fans. He also searches for Times Square for the ball drop countdown. Yohann shared this interest by finding the symbol for time, adding an "s" from the keyboard, finding a square and then hitting the speak button - "Times Square!" Before Yohann had his communication iPad he felt frustrated and he would communicate by pointing, gesturing, nodding yes/no, or showing his parents something on the play iPad. His parents found out he could spell by seeing him type his name on the iPad. He also tried to communicate with his parents by using emojis on their phones!

When Yohann is getting ready for bed he uses his Talker to say random words or sentences and tell knock knock jokes. Mom and dad are so proud of Yohann and talk of how Yohann can be shown once how to do something on his iPad and he remembers it. It is very helpful for Yohann to be able to chat with his communication device when he is searching YouTube on his play iPad. This way he can talk about what he is watching and share his joy with others! Yohann uses the Pictello storytelling app and mom said he used it to share about Camp yAAC at school. One of his friends went up to her and said, "I saw Yohann ziplining - that was fun!" Yohann has had so many great experiences with his family and will tell you one of his favorite rides in Disney World is "Small World."

Yohann's Educational Assistant, Sarah Bilous has worked with him since kindergarten. She sees him inspiring other children to use their Talkers by his example. When he and Sarah visit the kindergarten class, he greets the students with "hello room one, how are you? I had library today, did you have library today?" Now kids are seeking him out to see what he has to say to them. Sarah and Yohann were at Camp yAAC together this past summer. Sarah was nervous for Yohann when exotic creatures like lizards and snakes, were being shown to him because animals used to upset him - but to her surprise, Yohann began touching and petting them! They can now enjoy reading books and having conversations in class that include animals. Sarah now sees Yohann teasing and cracking jokes. Sarah and Yohann were telling a student, "if you fall off that beam you have to get back on." When the student fell off, Yohann declared "no cheating!" Sarah remarks that since Yohann's Talker came into the picture it has been a total game changer for him!





YOHANN ARTICLE (CONT'D)

Erin Curtis has been Yohann's Resource Teacher since kindergarten. She knows Yohann to be a hard worker and a bright grade one student. The moment he was introduced to his Talker they started to learn his personality and found he really likes to make people laugh with his beautiful sense of humour. Erin got Yohann a divisional iPad to use with the P2Go app until he received his own Talker in June 2023. With his Talker he was able to say which play centres he wanted to explore and which peers he wanted to play with. Yohann has Cerebral Palsy and works hard at other independent and physical goals by using his walker and riding his adapted bike.



Jenn (SLP) says Yohann is already adding plurals and changing the tense of verbs to successfully use the grammar feature of his Proloquo2Go app. There is discussion around Yohann using the Proloquo4Text text to speech app as typing is his preferred method of communication. He is working on language goals that include answering "wh" questions. Jenn says "He's taken such ownership over his Talker and honours that his iPad is his voice and often doesn't like it when people touch it. He is showing us that he has a lot of skills and every day it seems he does something new that just amazes us!"



Open Access Resource Centre  
presents

**AACross  
the Board**

*A Night out with friends*

We are excited to host an evening of fun at OARC! Bring your communication device and a friend and join us for a night of classic board games. This is a great opportunity for **youth (ages 12+)** to connect with each other using their AAC device!

**Games night for  
AAC Users 12+**



**EMAIL TO REGISTER**

*mary-alex@oarc.ca*

*Where? 316 Tache Avenue, Winnipeg*

*When? Thursday, November 30th*

*What time? 6:00-7:30 pm*



**PROLOQUO2GO –  
ADDITIONAL TOOLS FOR  
ADVANCED LEARNERS**

**MONDAY DECEMBER 4TH, 2023**

**6:15-7:45PM**

**COST: \$25\***

**WORKSHOP HOST:**

**Samantha Enns, RSLP, M.Cl.Sc. S-LP(C)  
Speech-Language Pathologist**

**All workshops will be held virtually via  
Microsoft Teams.**

**Contact us to receive a registration link!**

**\*Funds raised from workshops will go toward  
purchasing a communication device for a child.**

**FOR INFORMATION & REGISTRATION PLEASE E-MAIL:**

***mary-alex@oarc.ca***

## 2023 OARC CONFERENCE

BY ELIZABETH GRAUER



We were thrilled to have Kate McLaughlin (The AAC Coach) present at our 2023 OARC Conference! This was our first time meeting for a conference since 2019 and it was wonderful to be back.

Kate McLaughlin is a Speech-Language Pathologist who specializes in AAC for children with complex communication needs (CCN). She believes that autonomous communication, inclusion, and self-determination are fundamental human rights. You can find Kate on Instagram @the.aac.coach, or at her website [www.theaaccoach.com](http://www.theaaccoach.com).

Kate's all-day workshop provided clear background information regarding why AAC is important, and best practice for implementation. She included great visuals which can be used to pass this info on to parents/school teams. Her approach is neurodiversity affirming and focuses on having authentic interactions with people who use AAC to communicate. She highlighted great strategies for different stages of language learning on how we can best support children with CCN to learn their devices through our authentic interactions with them. She also emphasized the importance of training communication partners (friends and family members) as a key piece of an AAC implementation plan. Kate gave so many great real life examples from her practice of what this can look like and shared templates/handouts that can be useful to use to support people who use AAC and the teams around them.

Thank you to everyone on the Conference Committee and the OARC staff for making this day happen! We are also so thankful to our supporters: [Tobii Dynavox](#) and [Makers Making Change](#).

### CONGRATULATIONS to our OARC Conference Door Prize Winners

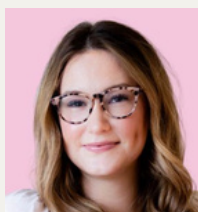
Thank you to our Prize Donors!

**Lori Bastness:** Staycation & WOW Hospitality  
Gift Card donated by: Spruce Properties &  
QX104 Country

**Pamela Zary:** Floral Bouquets  
donated by Addison Taylor Design

**Barb Warren:** Gift Basket donated by Nature's  
Farm & Necklace donated by Sugar Blossom

**Sarah Mulhall:** Children's Book Basket  
donated by Children's Therapy Collective



Open Access Resource Centre  
in-person Conference

Presenting:

Emily Diaz

9am - 4pm, Thursday, May 2, 2024  
Viscount Gort Hotel, Winnipeg

Introduction to AAC & Gestalt Language Processing  
& Managing AAC in the Classroom:  
Implementation Strategies

Emily Diaz, M.S. CCC-SLP is a certified speech-language pathologist with a passion for empowering individuals to find their voice. Emily's expertise extends to topics like managing AAC in the classroom, the importance of staff-buy in and dynamic coaching methods, and the nuances of gestalt language processing and AAC implementation strategies.

Please visit Emily's social media sites:

<https://www.emilydiazslp.com>  
<https://www.facebook.com/emilydiazslp>  
<https://www.instagram.com/emilydiazslp>

Visit our website in mid-January 2024  
for registration - [www.oarc.ca](http://www.oarc.ca)

thank you for your  
patience!

As you know, we began a new remote management system and had to transfer all previously remotely managed iPads to our new system. We apologize for any disruption to children who use communication iPads and their families. Please call our office anytime help is needed to remedy any technical difficulties.





### GET YOUR ROOT BEER FLOATS HERE!

You guys are awesome! Norah, Violet, Anna and Mary raised \$310 to help kids get communication iPads!



### VINYL COREBOARDS

OARC is no longer stocking vinyl coreboards. Create a Vinyl Banner at [VistaPrint](#). You can take a screenshot of your child's device or download a coreboard from [Assistiveware](#). If your child uses TD Snap you can contact TobiiDynavox directly for playground core boards.

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## Closing The Gap 2024



This past October, four of our OARC staff travelled to Minneapolis, MN to attend the Closing the Gap conference. This annual conference is an opportunity to deepen assistive technology knowledge and strengthen implementation strategies. We were excited to see world renown experts like Linda Burkhart, Karen Kangas (OT), Erin Sheldon, and Mo Buti presenting across 3 full days of workshops and informative lectures. There was a clear trend focussing on training communication partners at the conference. Our favourite presenters were [Chickadee AAC](#). The take-away from their session was to incorporate more hands-on learning (and fun) into training sessions for communication partners. We also attended an AAC improv event and an AAC game for communication partners. Assistiveware attended the conference and presented their newest communication software called Proloquo. They presented extensive research behind this app and shared that their intention is to preserve the robustness of the system and scaffold best practices in AAC. This app is similar to Proloquo2Go in its appearance, but the grid size is set at 60 buttons with static core vocabulary and motor-planned fringe vocabulary. Data was collected from 50,000 Proloquo2Go users and they found that 80% do not use the recommended settings within the app! The conference also held an assistive technology makers event, an exhibit hall, and a great opportunity to network. At the AAC Town Hall, people who communicate with AAC have an opportunity to share their perspectives. Lydia Dawley and Krista Howard were particularly inspiring in sharing about their experiences growing up using AAC. Lydia has written a book called "Looking Through My Eyes" about a determined little girl with cerebral palsy (you can find it on amazon!). Overall, we had a great experience at Closing the Gap and are looking forward to using this knowledge to support our community.



### CAMP YAAC 2023

**Yay! Volunteers and camper attendants were doing SO MUCH modelling over the three days at Camp Manitou!**



More campers than ever got out onto the lake using the accessible dock. Cool early-morning swimming and water games didn't deter anyone! Prairie Exotics thrilled the campers with their creepy crawlies and facts. Pictello stories were downloaded to campers' iPads so they had something to share with friends and family. Check out our [camp video](#)!

Visit our website and Facebook in early February 2024 to access the application form for Camp yAAC - July 23, 24, 25, 2024.

# Giving the Gift of Speech...Opens Up a World!

Thank you to the following individuals and organizations who made a donation between  
**April 1, 2022 and March 31, 2023.**  
*You are making a difference in the lives of Manitobans!*

Lynne Bailey  
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Ryan Wieler

## TRIBUTE GIFTS

Gifts In Honour of:  
Leslie Goertzen's  
Retirement  
Sophie Grace  
Lori Wiebe's Retirement

**THANK YOU!**



&  
**CAROL J. HARVEY**

**for supporting  
CAMP YAAC 2022!**



## FOUNDATIONS & CORPORATIONS

**THANK YOU!!**

**FROM APRIL 1 2022 - MARCH 31, 2023**



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for any errors, Please contact OARC office with any concerns.