

## Success in Schools Education Course

*On Monday 5th and Tuesday 6th March, 47 teachers, teacher's aides, SENCOs and parents met at the Waipuna Hotel & Conference Centre to hear expert presenters impart their knowledge on working with our children.*

Fantastic existing and exciting new presenters shared practical information and advice on a range of topics from inclusion, to literacy and how to support our children using visual aids, maths, narrative assessment, and behaviours and friendships.

We had a wonderful facilitator in Kirsten MacDonald, whose interest and passion for our children to have meaningful and positive education experiences exuded throughout the day. After welcoming our guests, Kirsten introduced our first presenter Edward Borkin, who is one of our members with Down syndrome. Unfortunately, due to being unwell that day, Edward was unable to deliver his presentation, so Christel stepped in to share his story in his absence.

Our next presenter was Dr Jude McArthur, a senior lecturer in the Institute of Education at Massey University, who spoke on inclusion. Jude's background is in primary teaching, teacher education and disability research. She also has a particular interest in the development of socially just, inclusive school communities that welcome, value and respond to diversity.

After a morning tea break we welcomed Margi Leech, a teacher with a wealth of experience gained in New Zealand and the United States, who presented on the learning profile of a student with Down syndrome. Many of you will also know Margi as a parent to Emily, who has Down syndrome, and as a member of ADSA.

A break for lunch allowed guests to mix and mingle while enjoying the delicious buffet style spread on offer.

Following the break Margi continued the session by sharing a 30-minute video presentation from Dr Rhonda Faragher, who spoke on Doing maths that matters! Rhonda has internationally recognised expertise in the mathematics education of learners with Down syndrome. Margi continued the presentation on from Rhonda, expanding further on maths in the classroom setting and introducing us to Numicon.

The last presentation for the day was on literacy and was delivered by the enthusiastic and engaging Dr Sally Clendon. Sally is a senior lecturer in speech and language therapy at Massey University.

She is passionate about access to the curriculum and to literacy learning for children with complex communication needs. Her presentation also touched on the use of augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) methods that our children may need to use to communicate their thoughts and needs.

At the end of the day we took time to reflect on what we had learnt from the presenters and how we could relate our learnings back to the child/children we work with.

Day two started with a presentation from the lovely Emma Ferens, another of our members with Down syndrome, who spoke about her life in general, what she has achieved and where she is now, as well as positive and negative experiences from when she was at school.

Following on from Emma we heard about narrative assessment from Tracey Elder, a parent and teacher who was involved in the roll-out of narrative assessment across Auckland. Tracey's very practical presentation is always a highlight for participants as it showcases this excellent assessment tool that provides a positive, credit-based approach that focusses on students' capabilities and strengths.

After a morning tea break we come back to hear from Fiona Kenworthy, a specialist speech-language therapist at Small Talk Therapy, on the use of visual aids and strategies to support learning in the inclusive setting. Fiona also expanded on AAC, which specifically allows individuals who do not experience typical language development in childhood access to functional communication (to get one's basic wants and needs known). AAC also serves as a gateway to literacy for individuals transitioning from icon-based language to written language and provides visual prompting for those who are unable to access their full communicative abilities.

After another tasty lunch we were joined by psychologist Phillipa Lilburn, who spoke on behaviours and friendships. Phillipa offered practical examples and advice on several behavioural challenges that participants were experiencing with the child/children they work with, as well as more general advice on more common behaviours. Her

session on friendship is also excellent and essential for everyone to hear, understand and collaborate on.

Once again, we took time to reflect on what we had learnt from the presenters and how we could relate our learnings back to the child/children we work with before Kirsten gave a summary of the two days and thanked and farewelled our guests.

As with all ADSAs events there is a lot of hard work, time and commitment given by a select few members. We owe a huge thank you specifically to Kirsten McDonald, Angela Owen, Tracey Elder and Christel van Baalen for everything they do to bring together this fantastic course that provides such wonderful benefits for our children and the people they are working with and learning from in their education setting.

The high-rating results gained from the feedback forms show that this two-day course is invaluable for members, our children and their educators. If your child's teacher and teacher's aides have not yet attended, they can do so at the next course on Monday 6th and Tuesday 7th August 2018. Keep an eye out for further information and to book in the

ADSA eNews mid-way through the year. The course is also suitable for SENCOs, parents/caregivers and family members.

**New presenter:** We are pleased to announce that specialist paediatric occupational therapist Arul Hamill will present the learning profile of students with Down syndrome. Arul has over 23 years of paediatric experience gained from working with child development teams in the 1990s, through to running a private practice from 2003 and working with ACC and school learning support units. Arul has experience with children who have developmental delay, syndromes, cerebral palsy, head injuries, prematurity, learning challenges and neurological conditions. As well, she has experience with equipment support, cross-cultural support and working in the community, including clinic, home and school.

**Family rate:** We are also pleased to announce that we have a new family rate of \$150 per person, including GST. ADSA is providing this subsidised rate to family members of a child with Down syndrome to make the course accessible to more families within our community for the benefit of our children.



Philip Venables and Kirsten McDonald with their son Joshua.



Emma Ferens performing at ADSA's annual Buddy Walk