Reading with Blissymbolics is a Blissful experience
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What started out as an experiment for me became one of my biggest achievements imaginable. I enrolled for the BA Honours course in AAC at the Centre for Augmentative and Alternative Communication (CAAC) at the University of Pretoria because I did not know how to help a little boy in our school (Platorand Special School (LSEN)) in Belfast. The young one was in desperate need to let his needs and wants be known. At the CAAC we learned about Blissymbolics and many other ways of communication but Blissymbolics for some reason struck me as being very useful, although at the time I didn’t realise how useful it could be.

One very cold mid-winter’s morning my learners had to write notes from the blackboard and I discovered (although I knew, but didn’t want to acknowledge the fact that some learners can’t read and write), that Nandile can’t write at all. Then all the AAC learning kicked in and I immediately test Nandile to see whether or not she will be able to read with Blissymbolics. She understood the first symbols I gave her to read, it was also the only symbols I had in my possession at the time. The symbols were taught to us at the University of Pretoria.

Nandile started to read with Blissymbolics on 23 June 2013 and as much as she was shy and she is now a happy delightful learner.

Early in August I started to work with another learner Paul Grundlingh, who also couldn’t read or write. Although he was very shy about his disability he quickly started to read with Blissymbolics. On the 12th of August 2013, I wrote the alphabet down for him at the back of his Blissymbolics writing book. I wrote the sound, roman word and then the Blissymbols, so that he could see both the written words and the Blissymbols together. We also wrote simple sentences in his writing book and under each symbol I wrote the words for him. He reads his symbols in Afrikaans, since he is Afrikaans, and the sentence he read is as follows;

\[
1 \rightarrow \bigtriangledown \rightarrow \bigtriangleup
\]

Ek is lief vir mamma.

Today, 2 September 2013 he had to read his sentences again. He started out fine but struggled when he came to the word ‘vir’ and then I saw him spelled ‘vir’, pointing with his finger on every letter he sounded. What a blissful moment it was.

We have done his alphabet with letter – word – symbol e.g.

\[
m = \text{monkey} = \bigtriangledown \rightarrow \bigtriangledown
\]
In conclusion I just want to say to all the other educators, parents, caregivers and guardians that struggle to get a child or learner to read, it is not over, there are other ways to get a child or adult to read. Thanks to AAC and the lecturers at the CAAC in Pretoria, we can all do it. And as Maureen Casey from Pixon said in one of the workshops, “Everybody CAN read”, we just have to believe and be very patient and persistent.

Blissymbolics from:

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[Links to resources provided]

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Nandile has whole new outlook on life. The once shy little girl blossomed and became this positive, confident, happy young girl.

Thank you all at Bliss for enriching our young people’s life’s too.