



Intensive Interaction Newsletter

Jan/Feb 2004

Issue 4

News in Brief:

- There are some spare places on the 5 morning training courses in *Intensive Interaction* being given by Marion Crabbe (Speech and Language Therapist) and Graham Firth (Intensive Interaction Project Leader) at St Mary's Hospital in Leeds. There are 2 courses, one starting in late March, on Tuesday mornings, 9.30-12.30, (23/3/04 to 27/4/04) and one on Wednesday mornings, 9.30- 12.30, starting in late April (28/4/04 to 26/5/04)

Anyone wishing to put their names forward should contact Marion Crabbe on 0113 3055393 **ASAP**.

Dr Penny Lacey (Senior Lecturer in Education at The School of Education, Birmingham University) is again presenting her **BILD** training event on 'meeting the needs of people with profound learning disabilities', covering various topics and issues including *Intensive Interaction*. The event is to be repeated in Kidderminster on Friday 26th of March, so if you are interested please contact BILD:
Tel: 01562 723025, or
e-mail: learning@bild.org.uk

About Dave Hewett

Dave Hewett, along with Melanie Nind, is generally known as one of the founding proponents of the approach known as *Intensive Interaction*. His background is an educational one, with his original specialism actually being English Literature, orientated to English in Secondary education!

However, some college voluntary work stimulated his interest in pupils with special needs, and eventually after a couple of teaching posts, he was appointed as Deputy Headteacher at the Harperbury Hospital School in Radlett, Herts. in 1981. The School was on the campus of Harperbury Hospital, and specialised in working with students who were particularly challenging. In 1983 he was appointed Headteacher at the school.

In 1985 he commenced a one-year full-time Advanced Diploma course at Cambridge Institute of Education, and studied: communication before speech; autism; challenging behaviour; pre-lingual deafness and its effects on behaviour, and F.E. provision for people with severe and complex learning disabilities. He then returned to his role at the school.

In 1987 he gave his first conference speech: 'Interactive Approaches to the Education of Children with Severe Learning Difficulties', at Westhill College, Birmingham, and had his first journal publication: 'Interaction as Curriculum', in the *British Journal of Special Education*.

By 1988 he had begun to study for his Ph.D. on '*Intensive Interaction* - towards a methodology for enhancing sociability and communication abilities in people with severe and complex, and severe and profound learning difficulties' which he achieved in 1994.

In 1990 he left his post at Harperbury Hospital School, and he presently spends his working time giving workshops, training, lecturing and doing consultancy work on *Intensive Interaction* and approaches to the management of 'challenging behaviour' all over the UK.

His publications on *Intensive Interaction* to date are:

1. Access to Communication

(with Melanie Nind ;
London: David Fulton)

2. Interaction in Action

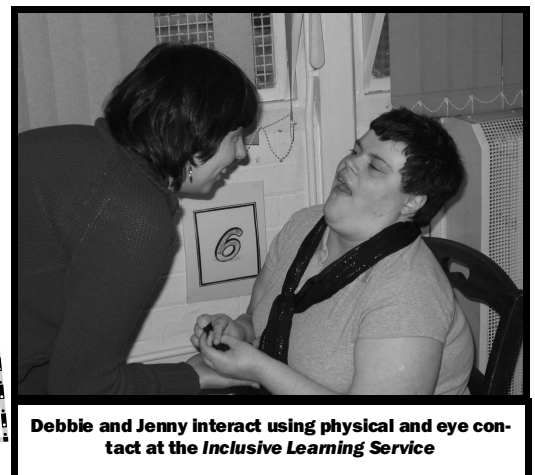
(with Melanie Nind;
London: David Fulton)

3. A Practical Guide to Intensive Interaction

(with Melanie Nind;
Plymouth: BILD.)

(The information given above was flagrantly copied from his very own website at:
www.davehewett.com)

Oh and P.S he's a really smashing bloke!



Debbie and Jenny interact using physical and eye contact at the Inclusive Learning Service

Quote of the week/month/millennium!
... there should be no element of slavery in learning
enforced learning will not stay in the mind ...
Plato, in *The Republic*, vii.

Intensive Interaction - A Personal Account

Name: Malcolm Henshall

Position: Class Teacher: Penny Field School, Leeds



I don't claim to have used *Intensive Interaction* in its purest form but have been inspired by it for 8 years or so, as a class teacher with students from the age of 11-19. The school that I work in is an all-age school [2-19] and is categorised as being for those with 'Severe Learning Difficulties'. For one reason or another the school has a high percentage of pupils/students with profound learning difficulties.

I think it was about 8/9 years ago that I attended a Dave Hewett course in Manchester about '*Intensive Interaction*'. I can't remember why I wanted to go but guess I must have read something in the 'blurb' that attracted me. I have worked with students with pmlD for 22 years or so. Courses specifically regarding pmlD are few and far between and I expect this one stuck out as being particularly relevant.

What I do remember very well is the effect the course had on me. It was a revelation and a relief to hear someone speak about a method of teaching/communicating that...

- ❖ seemed respectful to those I worked with,
- ❖ made sense,
- ❖ fitted in with the way many of those who attended the course wanted to work,
- ❖ and supplied us with the theory and respectability we needed to have the confidence to use this sort of approach.

I had come into the sort of education I am still in at a time when the prevailing method of teaching was 'Behavior Modification' and whilst, if delivered in an acceptable manner, it can be very effective, I had long since come to doubt its effectiveness with those with pmlD. I still hold to much that 'Behaviour Modification' offers [praising what is good, ignoring what is not wanted - if safe] but I didn't find it helpful in teaching new skills. It also, in my case, led me into trying to teach skills that were not really going to improve the student's quality of life.

I'd come to these conclusions long before discovering '*Intensive Interaction*' but I think such thoughts led me into teaching in an '*Intensive Interaction*' type of way. The introduction of the 'National Curriculum' also helped to open up education for those with pmlD. Whilst initially we were not given a lot of help in delivering the 'National Curriculum', and it seemed an almost impossible task, what it did do is make us offer a much wider breadth of experiences. It encouraged us to become more creative and more imaginative as we strove to deliver a curriculum that had been written for those of average ability, and above, from the age of five.

Within this challenge I think I came to teach in a much more interactive way than had been the case previously.

After going on the Dave Hewett course I came back fired up with enthusiasm to get started. However, I soon realised that it would be very difficult to immerse myself in '*Intensive Interaction*' whilst still delivering the breadth of the 'National Curriculum'. Also I didn't want to change this as I felt I was now delivering an education that enabled the students to get much more out of being at school.

Initially, over the first two or three years, I did have designated '*Intensive Interaction*' sessions. These were great times and not only enabled us to spend 10 minutes or so in 'taskless' interaction with each student, but they also served to help train myself, and the people I worked with, in the ways of '*Intensive Interaction*'.

I was never very good at keeping records but did create special recording sheets and both from these and observation, we did see progress. One particular student I remember seemed to improve a great deal in the way she communicated with us at all times. Whilst I cannot prove that this was due to the '*Intensive Interaction*' sessions, I believe it was and the improvements coincided with this time. The sessions also taught us how to observe subtle communication and responses from the students. It was also a great release to not have an end to be working towards apart from the pleasure of being together.

What I am sure of is that these sessions taught us so much about how we should work at all other times. We were able to take the principles of '*Intensive Interaction*' into all our other work e.g. Patience, respect, fun, close observation, interaction, etc. We also got to know our students much better by spending that quiet intense time with them.

Writing the above makes me wonder why I stopped these sessions but at the time I think it was because I thought that perhaps 10 minutes a week with each pupil was not really enough. However I think what I learned from the course, and the work since, has had a massive effect on the way I, and the people I work with, respond to and interact with our students. I put a great deal of stress on getting the atmosphere right in the class and the underlying principles of '*Intensive Interaction*' help in this. '*Intensive Interaction*' is not difficult, but perhaps some people get to grips with it quicker than others and I'm extremely lucky that those I work with seem to be 'naturals' in their ability to interact with the students.

To begin with it can seem very strange sitting with a student who to all intents and purposes is not communicating at all. However, in time it can become an enjoyable and interesting experience for both parties, both the student and the staff member needs to get used to this strange new situation.

I hope this has not been too rambling an account of my experiences and due to writing this I am seriously thinking of reintroducing designated '*Intensive Interaction*' sessions.

Malcolm Henshall 2/11/03



'The Effect Of Intensive Interaction On The Sociability Of A Man With Severe Intellectual Disabilities' by Lovell, Jones, and Ephraim, in the *International Journal of Practical Approaches to Disability*, (1998) .

This piece of research was conducted to investigate whether a withdrawn, pre-verbal man with severe intellectual disabilities showed an increase in sociable behaviour in two differing conditions. In one, a Clinical Psychologist engaged in *Intensive Interaction* with the client; in the second, the same Psychologist remained close to the client but did not interact with him (termed 'proximity sessions'). The research was conducted in a long stay hospital for people with severe/profound intellectual disabilities. The client was a 53-year-old man with severe intellectual disabilities, he used no spoken language; he would, however, hum to himself and sing without words. He spent most of his time sitting alone in the corner.

The Results:

Physical contact: the client did not initiate any physical contact before the interventions. During the 'proximity sessions' he did make physical contact on a number of occasions. However, there was much more physical contact in the *Intensive Interaction* sessions, in one session the client squeezed the psychologists hands as part of a game for 90% of the observations.

Looking at someone: before the interventions the client spent at most 10% of any session looking at another person. In some 'proximity sessions' there was an increased occurrence in looking behaviour; however, during the *Intensive Interaction* sessions, more than 10% of every session was spent looking at somebody, rising to over 70% on two occasions.

Vocalisation: During the course of the intervention vocalisation (humming or wordless singing) appeared to increase over levels recorded previously in both the *Intensive Interaction* and the 'proximity sessions'.

Joint attention: No episodes of joint attention were recorded prior to the interventions. There was one recorded instance of joint attention in the 'proximity sessions'. Episodes of joint attention were, however, observed during the *Intensive Interaction* sessions, recording over 70% on two occasions.

Smiling or laughing: No smiling or laughing was recorded prior to the interventions. However, the client was noticed to smile and laugh during two 'proximity sessions', and more often during *Intensive Interaction* sessions.

Looking at a toy: the client's tendency to look at a toy in his hand remained relatively stable prior to, and over the period including the 'proximity sessions' and the intensive interaction sessions.

Covering face (at least half of his face being covered): the client covered his face with his clothes for 25 to 50% of the time prior to the interventions. This behaviour was only briefly evident on one of the 17 intervention sessions (during a 'proximity session'). There were no occurrences in the *Intensive Interaction* sessions.

From this research the results indicated that during the *Intensive Interaction* sessions the client tended to initiate more physical contact; spend more time looking at people; demonstrate more joint attention, and smile/laugh and vocalise more than he did prior to the interventions. He showed no examples of covering his face during the *Intensive Interaction* sessions, although this had been a frequent behaviour previously. The increase in sociability appeared to generalise to the 'proximity sessions', although the changes were significantly less marked than in the *Intensive Interaction* sessions.

The nursing staff who regularly worked with the client also commented that during the interaction period the subject appeared happier and more willing to interact than he had been before. His increased sociability also seemed to generalise from the *Intensive Interaction* setting to other contexts.



**Apologies to Barbara Robinson (pictured above) from the Blenheim Centre, Leeds, for not including her picture with her quite moving 'Personal Account' in Newsletter 2:
Thanks again Barbara.**

Contact us!

Have you got any pieces of news or information that you think might be of interest to other people working in this area? It might be your own story of using *Intensive Interaction*, perhaps a book review, or some information on a training event. Anything will be very gladly received.

If you have, then just send it in to the address below.

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