Communication Guidelines

These Communication Guidelines were developed by the following school staff members:

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- Peter McGill (Principal)

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Table of Contents

- Introduction .................................................................................................................. 3
- Rationale ...................................................................................................................... 3
- Literature ................................................................................................................... 4
  - The Communication Bill of Rights ................................................................. 4
- WSSSS Student Communication Profile and Individual Curriculum Plan(ICP) / Personal Development Plan(PDP) ................................................................. 5
- Communication Assessment Suite at Western Suburbs State Special School (WSSSS) .................................................................................................................. 6
  - The Communication Matrix ................................................................. 6
  - Marion’s Blank’s Levels of Questioning ............................................... 8
- Responsibilities ......................................................................................................... 9
- Communication Approaches at WSSSS .................................................................. 10
  - Key Word Sign ......................................................................................... 10
  - Symbols and Photographs ........................................................................ 10
  - Communication Passport ........................................................................... 11
  - Aided Language Stimulation (ALS) ...................................................... 11
  - Intensive Interaction .................................................................................. 11
  - Pragmatic Organisation Dynamic Display (PODD) ..................................... 12
  - Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS) .................................... 12
  - Speech Generating Devices (SGDs) ......................................................... 12
- References ............................................................................................................... 13
- Appendices
  - Appendix 1 - WSSSS Framework for Understanding Communication Matrix ................................................................. 14
  - Appendix 2 - WSSSS Guide to Accessing & Understanding The Communication Matrix ................................................................. 16
  - Appendix 3 - WSSSS Student Communication Profile ........................................ 27
  - Appendix 4 - WSSSS Boardmaker Plus Symbol Dictionary for Core Vocabulary ................................................................................................ 33
  - Appendix 5 - Communication Passport ....................................................... 34
  - Appendix 6 - WSSSS Speech Language Pathology (SLP) Support Profile ............................................................................................................. 35
  - Appendix 7 - Terminology ................................................................................ 36
**Introduction**

Communication is the act of giving or receiving information and the process of exchanging views, feelings, information, knowledge and experiences. It is:

- fundamental to all aspects of life
- important for quality of life
- a foundation for learning

Every individual has the right to effective communication to express wants, needs, ideas and to communicate messages to others. The ability to communicate effectively greatly impacts individuals with a disability to build relationships, make choices and participate in everyday life.

This document outlines the principles and communication practices within Western Suburbs Special State School (WSSSS). It also outlines the goals and philosophy of communication at WSSSS, assessment practices, communication interventions and the responsibilities of all staff (teachers and teacher aides) in promoting and supporting communication.

**Rationale**

Effective communication is the most important skill we can teach our students to better enable them to effectively learn in all areas of their daily lives.

These Communication Guidelines are structured to support staff in developing effective communication systems from the beginning years of schooling which will lay the foundation for the emergence of communication and the development of language skills that are functional for the student and necessary for access to the curriculum.

At this school we value the expert support of the Speech Language Pathologists, the contribution that parents bring to assist in developing an understanding of their child, and the need for all staff to become competent and supportive communicators with every student. We believe that every child has a right to develop communication according to the Communication Bill of Rights and to develop a communication system that meets their individual needs.

To achieve this rationale staff will

- be given the professional learning they require to enhance their knowledge of available communication systems and devices
- observe and assess students abilities; and develop and implement programs
- access the professional advice of the Speech Language Pathologist through a referral process
- consult with key stakeholders and professionals to design a communication plan
- implement strategies and communication systems
• continue to follow the plan that is developed for each student until a review is required

Aim:

These guidelines aim to assist teachers in their decision making and promote a consistent approach across the school.

Importantly we believe in creating a communication-accessible community so that every student can access, participate in and contribute to all classroom and school conversations, decisions, choices and ultimately – learning.

**Literature**

**The Communication Bill of Rights**

Communication is a basic need and right of all human beings. According to the Communication bill of Rights (NJC, 1992) every individual person has the right to;

1. Request desired objects, actions, events, and persons, and to express personal preferences, or feelings.
2. Be offered choices and alternatives.
3. Reject or refuse undesired objects, events, or actions, including the right to decline or reject all proffered choices.
4. Request, and be given, attention from and interaction with another person.
5. Request feedback or information about their state, an object, a person, or an event of interest.
6. Active treatment and intervention efforts to enable people with severe disabilities to communicate messages in whatever mode is needed and as effectively and efficiently as their specific abilities will allow.
7. Have communication acts acknowledged and responded to, even when the intent of these acts cannot be fulfilled by the responder.
8. Have access to any needed augmentative and alternative communication devices and other assistive devices at all times, and to have those devices in good working order.
9. Environmental contexts, interactions, and opportunities that expect and encourage persons with disabilities to participate as full communication partners with other people, including peers.
10. Be informed about the people, things, and events in one’s immediate environment.
11. Be communicated with in a manner that recognizes and acknowledges the inherent dignity of the person being addressed, including the right to be part of communication exchanges about individuals that are conducted in his or her presence.
12. Be communicated with in ways that are meaningful, understandable, and culturally and linguistically appropriate (NJC, 1992).
**WSSSS Student Communication Profile and Individual Curriculum Plan (ICP) / Personal Development Plan (PDP)**

The WSSSS Student Communication Profile [Appendix 3] is a description of the student’s communication mode, skills (e.g. receptive language, expressive language), behaviour and its possible intent. It is compiled using the WSSSS Communication Assessment Suite and may be in the form of a current Speech Language Pathology report or Communication Matrix Profile. This profile will provide the overview of the student’s communication skills, current communication goals and strategies to support the student’s communication needs and outline the student’s communication abilities as well as developmental level of communication and will follow the student throughout their schooling at WSSSS and can be also used by significant others, schools and post school agencies when exiting school.

Each student will have a communication goal/focus in their Individual Curriculum Plan (ICP) or Personal Development Plan (PDP). This goal will be developed with key stakeholders. Below is a list of steps required in order to establish ICP/PDP communication goals and create a WSSSS Student Communication Profile.

**[STEP 1]** Teacher to complete communication assessments: Communication Matrix and Blank’s Levels of Questioning by week 4 Term 1.

**[STEP 2]** Highly Individualised Plan
- Teacher to develop a communication goal/focus in ICP or PDP for the student based on the communication assessments results
- Teacher to submit a referral to the SLP if further assessment or assistance is needed

**[STEP 2]** Different Year Level – Partial Plan
- Teacher to develop a communication goal/focus in PDP for the student based on the communication assessments results
- Teacher to submit a referral to the SLP if further assessment or assistance is needed

**[STEP 3]** In consultation with the SLP, teacher to create a 'WSSSS Student Communication Profile' (See 3 different examples in [Appendix 3])

**[STEP 4]** Teacher to continue to monitor and re-evaluate the student's progress and skills in the area of communication and review ICP/PDP in term 3 using communication assessment data.
The Communication Matrix

Rowland (2010) outlines three major aspects of communication:
1. the behaviours that someone uses to communicate (such as pointing);
2. the messages that someone expresses (such as “I want that”) and
3. the level of communication (such as abstract symbols).

Nine Categories of Communicative Behaviour
1. Body Movement
2. Early Sounds
3. Facial Expressions
4. Visual
5. Simple Gestures
6. Conventional Gestures and Vocalisations
7. Concrete Symbols
8. Abstract Symbols
9. Language

The Messages that someone expresses
There are four main reasons for communication:
1. to REFUSE things that we don’t want;
2. to OBTAIN things that we do want;
3. to engage in SOCIAL interaction; and
4. to provide or seek INFORMATION.
According to Rowland (2010) there are seven levels of communication that each individual communicates. These are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Level 1: Pre-Intentional Behaviour</td>
<td>At this level, an individual is not in control of their own behaviours. Rather, behaviours reflect the individual’s general state (such as comfortable, uncomfortable or hungry). Caregivers interpret the individual’s state from behaviours such as body movements, facial expressions and sounds. In typically developing children, this stage occurs between 0 and 3 months of age.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 2: Intentional Behaviour</td>
<td>Behaviour is under the individual’s control, but it is not yet used to communicate intentionally. Caregivers interpret the individual’s needs and desires from behaviours such as body movements, facial expressions, vocalizations and eye gaze. In typically developing children, this stage occurs between 3 and 8 months of age.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 3: Unconventional Communication</td>
<td>Unconventional communicative behaviours are “pre-symbolic” because they do not involve any sort of symbol; they are “unconventional” because they are not socially acceptable for us to use as we grow older. Communicative behaviours include body movements, vocalizations, facial expressions and simple gestures (such as tugging on people). In typically developing children, this stage occurs between 6 and 12 months of age.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 4: Conventional Communication</td>
<td>Conventional pre-symbolic behaviours are used intentionally to communicate. Communicative behaviours are “pre-symbolic” because they do not involve any sort of symbol; they are “conventional” because they are socially acceptable and we continue to use them to accompany our language as we mature. The meanings of some gestures may be unique to the culture in which they are used. Communicative behaviours include pointing, nodding or shaking the head, waving, hugging, and looking from a person to a desired object. Note that many of these gestures (and especially pointing) require good visual skills and may not be useful for individuals with severe vision impairment. Some vocal intonations may also be used at this stage. In typically developing children, this stage occurs between 12 and 18 months of age.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 5: Concrete Symbols</td>
<td>“Concrete” symbols that physically resemble what they represent, are used to communicate. Concrete symbols look like, feel like, move like or sound like what they represent. Concrete symbols include pictures, objects (such as a shoelace to represent “shoe”), “iconic” gestures (such as patting a chair to say “sit down”) and sounds (such as making a buzzing sound to mean “bee”). Most individuals skip this stage and go directly to Level VI. For some individuals concrete symbols may be the only type of symbol that makes sense to them; for others they may serve as a bridge to using abstract symbols. Typically developing children use concrete symbols in conjunction with gestures and words, generally between 12 and 24 months of age, but not as a separate stage.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 6: Abstract Symbols</td>
<td>Abstract symbols such as speech, manual signs, Braille or printed words are used to communicate. These symbols are “abstract” because they are NOT physically similar to what they represent. They are used one at a time. In typically developing children, this stage occurs between 12 and 24 months of age.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 7: Language</td>
<td>Symbols (concrete or abstract) are combined into two- or three symbol combinations (&quot;want juice&quot;, &quot;me go out&quot;), according to grammatical rules. The individual understands that the meaning of symbol combinations may differ depending upon how the symbols are ordered. In typically developing children, this stage begins around 24 months of age (Rowland, 2010).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Marion Blank’s Levels of Questioning
Blank’s questions are a list of different types of questions, from easy to more difficult, which have been found to help student’s learning. As the student’s understanding of language and general language skills develop, they are able to understand and respond to more difficult questions. Students need to demonstrate strong skills in the earlier levels (Levels 1 and 2) before they can move on to mastering the much more complex questions and language in the more difficult levels (Levels 3 and 4).

The 4 stages of Blank’s questions are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level 1</th>
<th>Matching Perception: Look at it! - Questions relate to what the student can see in front of them and hear at the time, or to objects or pictures that have just been removed.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| • Find one like this.  
• What’s this?  
• What colour is this?  
• What did the ….say?  
• What can you see?  
• Show me the…  
• Is it X or Y?  
• Who is that? |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level 2</th>
<th>Selective Analysis of Perception Talk about it! - Questions still related to what the student can see or hear, or objects/pictures just removed but more detail is expected in the answer. At this level, the student is expected to look more carefully at the objects and talk about what they can see (e.g. size, shape, colour, what is used for).</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| • Fine one that is …can…  
• What’ happening?  
• Who is..? When did..?  
• Where is the…?  
• Finish this sentence…  
• What is this for?  
• Tell me about his thing?  
• What does it do?  
• Fine on that is X and Y.  
• How are theses different?  
• What else is a X? (category)  
• What else could they do…? |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level 3</th>
<th>Re-ordering Perception Think about it! - More complex questions involving careful listening to every word of the question and thinking about what information the question has asked them to provide.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| • What will happen next?  
• What is…going to say?  
• How did he…?  
• How else could he do it?  
• How are these the same?  
• What’s your favourite…?  
• Tell me one that’s not…  
• What is a…?  
• Which one is…?  
• How did you feel?  
• What have they done so far? |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level 4</th>
<th>Reasoning About Perception Solve it! - The student is expected to think about what may have happened, what could happen or what would happen in a given situation. Involves problem solving to come up with an answer. This is the most complex Blank Level!</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| • What will happen if he…?  
• Why did you pick that one?  
• How did that happen?  
• What could he do?  
• What would you do if…?  
• What is it made of that?  
• How can we tell?  
• Why can’t he…?  
• Why do you like that one?  
• If you were X, what would you say/do? |
Responsibilities

Whole School Level
At the whole school level, appropriate communication assessments will be used to gather current data on every student’s communication needs. The Speech Language Pathologist will:
- provide professional development to support knowledge and skills in developing, implementing and assessing communication outcomes
- provide professional development on a range of communication systems
- provide ongoing support for teaching staff during the implementation, planning and assessing phases
- introduce new teachers to the WSSSS Communication Guidelines
- support new students entering the school

Teacher Level
Teachers will:
- complete or review communication assessments using the Communication Matrix and the Blank’s Levels of Questioning for students in their class in Term 1 and Term 3
- collaborate with key stakeholders: the student, parents, Speech Language Pathologist, outside agencies and the school principal
- design and implement a communication plan as defined or outlined in the ICP/PDP communication goals and a WSSSS Student Communication Profile specific to the needs of the student.
- work collaboratively with parents to ensure consistent use of communication systems at home and school.
- advocate for their students’ right to communication by creating a communication accessible environment throughout the school so that students are able to communicate with teachers and peers, and access the curriculum. This means that:
  - students will have access to communication systems to allow them to express what they want, when they want and in whatever means is most efficient,
- support students to develop their communication skills by:
  - modelling the use of multimodal communication
  - creating and facilitating opportunities for students to engage in communication
scaffolding, shaping and expanding their communication attempts

Communication Approaches at Western Suburbs Special State School

At WSSSS, a multimodal communication approach is used. This involves combining a variety of techniques from a combination of approaches. Communication method(s) used will vary from child to child. The aim is to encourage the student to communicate using a method suitable for them. In our school, we recognise that effective communication maybe supplemented with a wide variety of augmentative systems. The communication strategies or systems used will depend on the child’s skills and abilities. Many students, as well as teachers supporting them, will use a combination of communication methods to get their messages across successfully in different contexts e.g. sign, speech, gesture. A range of strategies and approaches are employed to develop individual communication skills. Included below is a brief description of common communication approaches and interventions currently being implemented at WSSSS. Please note: other communication approaches or devices are not listed in this document may also be used by students and staff at WSSSS.

Key Word Sign (formally known as Makaton)

Key Word Sign is the use of manual signs and natural gesture to support communication. Key Word Sign is used to encourage and support language development for children and adults with communication difficulties. Key Word Signing uses a core vocabulary of specially selected words (concepts and ideas). These concepts and ideas are considered to be the most appropriate for children and adults with communication and language difficulties. The use of signing greatly enhances a child’s ability to be an effective communicator. Each word (concept) is matched to a hand sign. Key Word Signing uses AUSLAN signs. AUSLAN is the native language of the Australian deaf community.

The main features of Key Word Sign include:

- use of sign and speech concurrently
- sign the key words but say the whole sentence
- use of visual strategies including body language, facial expression and directionality
- use of symbols where appropriate
- some use of finger spelling

Symbols and Photographs

WSSSS uses Boardmaker© PCS Symbols and Symwriter Symbols as the visual symbols system most commonly used across the school. Symbol vocabulary can be decided by the class teacher as appropriate for individual students and groups if it cannot be found in the WSSSS Boardmaker Plus Symbol Dictionary [Appendix 4].

Many students benefit from symbols for both expressive and receptive communication. Expressively, individuals may point to symbols to communicate a message. Receptively, individuals who struggle to comprehend speech alone may benefit from input supplemented by picture symbols and photographs.
**Communication Passports**

Personal Communication Passports [Appendix 5] provide a practical and person-centred approach to passing on key information about any individual. A Communication Passport is a way of supporting a person with communication difficulties across transitions, drawing together complex information (including the person’s own views) and distilling it into a clear, positive and accessible format. This helps staff and conversation partners to get to know the person. They can then interact/respond consistently to help the person make sense of events and get the best out of what communication abilities they do have.

**Aided Language Stimulation (ALS)**

Aided Language Stimulation is a teacher strategy in which the teacher points to an array of symbols on a communication display whilst verbally interacting with the student. Aided Language Stimulation allows the teacher to shape the students communication into longer more complete or more correct forms of expression. During Aided Language Stimulation, the communication partner points to a symbol while simultaneously producing the corresponding spoken word during natural communicative exchanges. Communication displays vary in the number and type of vocabulary displayed, the size of the vocabulary squares, and so forth, depending on the strengths and challenges of the child’s language comprehension abilities.

**Intensive Interaction**

Intensive Interaction is an approach for teaching communication abilities to children who are still at early stages of development. The approach focuses on teaching the fundamentals of communication – the communication concepts and performances that precede speech development.

The Fundamentals of Communication targeted by this approach are:

- enjoying being with another person
- developing the ability to attend to that person
- concentration and attention span
- learning to do sequences of an activity with another person
- taking turns in exchanges of behaviour
- sharing personal space
- using and understanding eye contacts, facial expression, physical contacts, non-verbal communication
- using vocalisations with meaning (for some, speech development)

The key features of the approach include:

- the creation of interactive games, being together with the purpose of enjoying the interaction
- the skill partner adjusting her/his interpersonal behaviours (e.g. gaze, voice, language use, body posture, facial expression) in order to become engaging
• interactions flowing in time with pauses, repetitions, and the skilled partner blending their responses to the mood and preferences of the learner.
• the use of intentionality – the willingness to credit the learner with intentions (i.e. responding to behaviours as if they are were requests or indicators)
• contingent responding (i.e. following the learner’s lead and handling over control of the activity.

**Pragmatic Organisation Dynamic Display (PODD)**
Pragmatic Organisation Dynamic Display (PODD) is a means of selecting and organising symbols so that people with complex communication needs and their communication partners can communicate more easily. PODD is a way of organising whole word and symbol vocabulary in a communication book. The aim of a PODD is to provide vocabulary:
• for continuous communication all the time
• for a range of messages
• across a range of topics
• in multiple environments
PODDs can have different formats, depending on the student’s physical, sensory and communication needs. PODDs can be used with direct access (student points directly to the symbols using their head, a finger or a tool), alternative access (alternative auditory visual presentation, partner assisted scanning, eye gaze) or a combination access format.

**Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS)**
Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS) is a communication system that uses picture symbols to allow students to communicate their needs and wants. PECS begins by teaching an individual to give a picture of a desired item to a “communicative partner”, who immediately honours the exchange as a request. The system goes on to teach discrimination of pictures and how to put them together in sentences. In the more advanced phases, individuals are taught to answer questions and to comment. The PECS teaching occurs in 6 phases that build up from previously mastered skills.

**Speech Generating Devices (SGDs)**
Speech generating devices (SGD), also referred to as voice-output communication aids, are electronic devices that allow the user to select messages to be spoken aloud, thereby assisting people who are unable to use natural speech to meet the majority of their communication needs. SGD can range from simple communication devices (e.g. a Bigmac which responds with a single message) to complex communication devices (e.g. a Dynavox or Proloquo2Go). Dedicated devices are intended for communication purposes only, while others are integrated into portable computer systems. Additional components may include but are not limited to environmental controls, switch access, rate enhancement programs and appointment schedules and reminders. Speech Language Pathologists and Occupational Therapists are involved to access the student’s suitability for a speech generating device.
References

Bill of Rights (NJC, 1992)


The Disability Act


Communication Matrix Handbook https://www.communicationmatrix.org/


The State of Queensland (2011). Complex communication needs. Department of Communities
# Appendices

## [Appendix 1] - WSSSS Framework for Understanding Communication Matrix

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level 1</th>
<th>Level 2</th>
<th>Level 3</th>
<th>Level 4</th>
<th>Level 5</th>
<th>Level 6</th>
<th>Level 7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre intentional Behaviour</td>
<td>Intentional Behaviour</td>
<td>Unconventional Communication</td>
<td>Conventional Communication</td>
<td>Concrete Symbol</td>
<td>Abstract Symbols</td>
<td>Language</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Examples

Communicative behaviours could include-body posture, tensing, eye gaze, moves closer or away, facial expressions, crying, whinging vocalizations, self stimulation, injurious behaviours

Communicative behaviours could include- trunk like behaviours, screaming, throwing self on the ground, pulling hair in frustration, scratching and biting. They may smile and show interest in interacting by physical contact and remaining close, making and maintaining eye contact.

Communicative behaviours could include body movements, vocalizations, proximity to object (standing near the door to indicate out) facial expressions and simple gestures (such as tugging on people).

Communicative behaviours could include pointing, nodding or shaking the head, waving, hugging, and looking from a person to a desired object (communication triad).

Communicative behaviours could include using an object objects (such as a shoelace to represent "shoe", nappy to suggest "time for the toilet"), "iconic" gestures (such as putting a chair to say "sit down") and sounds (such as making a buzzing sound to mean "bee").

Communicative behaviours could include naming of a person, object, or action in response to a question (What’s this?) or to ask for something that is not present.

### Communication Targets

- Developing engagement and participation
- Intensive interaction
- Early communication skills
- Eye Contact
- Attention
- Initiation
- Turn Taking
- Breath Control
- Babbling
- Symbolic Noise & words
- Meaningful Sounds

- Developing engagement and participation
- Intensive Interaction
- Early Communication Skills
- Encourage Communication Initiations
- Model good language by:
  - Key Word Signing/Natural Gesture
  - Picture Communication Symbols
  - Voice output devices
  - Use of simple language
- Developing consistency to understanding communication partner’s use of gestures/symbols

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Symbols</th>
<th>Communication book</th>
<th>Sensory activities</th>
<th>Leisure packs</th>
<th>Tac Pac</th>
<th>Multisensory environment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| • Encourage communication initiations  
  » Cause – effect  
  » Requesting more  
  » Understanding sensory cues  
  » Social engagement  
  » Develop anticipation  
  » Model good language by:  
  » Use of short, simple sentences | • Communication Passport - A Book About Me  
  • Communication Book  
  • Sensory activities  
  • Leisure packs  
  • Tac Pac  
  • Multisensory environment | • Communication Passport - A Book About Me  
  • Communication Book  
  • Sensory activities  
  • Leisure packs  
  • Tac Pac  
  • Multisensory environment | | | |
| • Developing Listening Awareness  
  • E.g. Initial response to sound  
  • Auditory discrimination  
  • Listening awareness of voice  
  • Refer to communication package | • Communication Passport – A Book About Me  
  • Communication Book  
  • Sensory activities  
  • Leisure pack  
  • Visual Schedules  
  • Timetables  
  • Request cards  
  • Modelling  
  • Finished strategies  
  • Object Choice Boards  
  • ALS Boards  
  • PODD  
  • PECS  
  • Key Word Signing  
  • Voice Output device or iPad  
  • BIG Mac  
  • Step by Step  
  • iTalk  
  • GoTalk  
  • Listening Awareness  
  • Auditory Discrimination  
  • Listening Awareness of voice opposed to other sounds  
  • Distinguishes between own name and others  
  • Floortime* | • Communication Passport – A Book About Me  
  • Communication Book  
  • Sensory activities  
  • Leisure pack  
  • Visual Schedules  
  • Timetables  
  • Chat Book  
  • Modelling  
  • Finished strategies  
  • Object Choice Boards  
  • ALS Boards  
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  • BIG Mac  
  • Step by Step  
  • iTalk  
  • GoTalk  
  • Blank’s Level of Questioning(Marion Blank)  
  • Level 1  
  • Vocabulary Development  
  • Listening awareness of voice opposed to other sounds  
  • Distinguishes between own name and others  
  • Floortime* | | | |
| • Developing Listening awareness and receptive understanding  
  • Use of visual strategies  
  • Simple language  
  • Understanding concepts  
  • Refer to ‘receptive language’ in communication package | • Communication Passport  
  • Communication Book  
  • Sensory activities  
  • Leisure pack  
  • Visual Schedules  
  • Timetables  
  • Chat Book  
  • Modelling  
  • Finished strategies  
  • Object Choice Boards  
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  • Vocabulary Development  
  • Listening behaviours – Classroom Tools Kit | | | | |
| • Developing Listening awareness and receptive understanding  
  • Refer to ‘Receptive language’ in communication package | • Communication Passport  
  • Communication Book  
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  • Leisure pack  
  • Visual Schedules  
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  • Level 1  
  • Vocabulary Development  
  • Listening behaviours – Classroom Tools Kit | • Communication Passport  
  • Communication Book  
  • Sensory activities  
  • Leisure pack  
  • Visual Schedules  
  • Timetables  
  • Chat Book  
  • Modelling  
  • Finished strategies  
  • Object Choice Boards  
  • ALS Boards  
  • PODD  
  • PECS  
  • Key Word Signing  
  • Voice Output device or iPad  
  • BIG Mac  
  • Step by Step  
  • iTalk  
  • GoTalk  
  • Blank’s Level of Questioning(Marion Blank)  
  • Level 1  
  • Vocabulary Development  
  • Listening behaviours – Classroom Tools Kit | | | |
| • Developing Listening awareness and receptive understanding  
  • Refer to ‘Social skills’ in communication package | • Communication Passport  
  • Communication Book  
  • Sensory activities  
  • Leisure pack  
  • Visual Schedules  
  • Timetables  
  • Chat Book  
  • Modelling  
  • Finished strategies  
  • Object Choice Boards  
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  • PODD  
  • PECS  
  • Key Word Signing  
  • Voice Output device or iPad  
  • BIG Mac  
  • Step by Step  
  • iTalk  
  • GoTalk  
  • Blank’s Level of Questioning(Marion Blank)  
  • Level 1 & 2  
  • Vocabulary Development  
  • Listening behaviours – Classroom Tools Kit | | | |
| • Developing social skills  
  • Refer to ‘Social skills’ in communication package | • Communication Passport  
  • Communication Book  
  • Sensory activities  
  • Leisure pack  
  • Visual Schedules  
  • Timetables  
  • Chat Book  
  • Modelling  
  • Finished strategies  
  • Object Choice Boards  
  • ALS Boards  
  • PODD  
  • PECS  
  • Key Word Signing  
  • Voice Output device or iPad  
  • BIG Mac  
  • Step by Step  
  • iTalk  
  • GoTalk  
  • Blank’s Level of Questioning(Marion Blank)  
  • Level 1 & 2  
  • Vocabulary Development  
  • Listening behaviours – Classroom Tools Kit | • Communication Passport  
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  • Chat Book  
  • Modelling  
  • Finished strategies  
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  • ALS Boards  
  • PODD  
  • PECS  
  • Key Word Signing  
  • Voice Output device or iPad  
  • BIG Mac  
  • Step by Step  
  • iTalk  
  • GoTalk  
  • Blank’s Level of Questioning(Marion Blank)  
  • Level 1 & 2  
  • Vocabulary Development  
  • Listening behaviours – Classroom Tools Kit | | | |
| • Developing pre-literacy skills such as:  
  » Phonological awareness  
  » Word awareness  
  » Syllable segmentation | • Communication Passport  
  • Communication Book  
  • Chat Book  
  • Modelling  
  • Finished strategies  
  • Visual Schedules  
  • Timetables  
  • Object Choice Boards  
  • ALS Boards  
  • PODD  
  • PECS  
  • Key Word Signing  
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  • Blank’s Level of Questioning(Marion Blank)  
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  • Object Choice Boards  
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  • Key Word Signing  
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  • Step by Step  
  • iTalk  
  • GoTalk  
  • Blank’s Level of Questioning(Marion Blank)  
  • Level 1 & 2  
  • Vocabulary Development  
  • Listening behaviours – Classroom Tools Kit | | | | |
Guide to Accessing & Understanding the Communication Matrix

DISCLAIMER

Please note that all of this information can be found in the Communication Matrix handbook. This document is for purposes of breaking down information into a step by step process to fill in the communication matrix online. For further information on how to interpret and use the data please refer to the Handbook or speak to our school SLP.
Adding a new student to the matrix:

1. Go to: www.communicationmatrix.org & find ‘Login’ on the top right hand corner. Please use Firefox or Chrome web browsers as the website is not supported but Internet explorer.
2. Enter Login details:

User ID: matrix@westernsuburbsspecs.eq.edu.au
Password: 3014August

Log In

EMAIL
matrix@westernsuburbsspecs.eq.edu.au

PASSWORD
**********

Log In

Register as a new user
3. To add a new student (who does not have a pre-existing matrix):

![Image of a website interface with options to start a new assessment and select an individual to assess.]

Hover over ‘Start a new assessment’. A drop down box should appear. Click on ‘Assess a new individual’.

4. Fill in as much of details as possible or at the very least:

- Person Identifier: **STUDENT NAME & FIRST INITIAL** (e.g. Amanda L)
- What is the relationship to the person you are assessing? Teacher
- Birth Month and year
- Gender
- Primary language spoken at home
- What country the person lives in
When you’ve finished, you will be re-direct to this pop-up page, click on ‘I’m starting a new matrix from scratch’:

Click here if you are entering new data on a student

Click here if you have already answered the matrix questions on a paper copy and you want to put the data in electronically. Selecting this option will prompt you to enter the date that you gathered the data.

Click here if you are reviewing a current student

5. How to answer the questions:
1. The matrix comprises of three initial questions to ask you to identify which descriptor best fits your student.

2. After you have identified your student as being either level A, B, or C, you will be prompted to answer the questions pertaining to that level of communication. Listed below is an overview of the questions you will be asked on the matrix:

3. If you have difficulty understanding the questions, please watch the videos linked at the top of the question.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>A. Can you tell when your child is uncomfortable?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A1. Can you tell when your child is uncomfortable?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A2. Can you tell when your child is content, comfortable or pleasantly excited?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A3. Can you tell that your child is interested in other people?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B. Can you tell that your child doesn’t want some specific thing, such as a certain food or a toy or a game that you’re playing, like tickling?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B1. Can you tell that your child doesn’t want some specific thing, such as a certain food or a toy or a game that you’re playing, like tickling?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B2. Can you sometimes tell that your child would like to continue an action or activity that you have just stopped doing with him/her?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B3. Can you sometimes tell that your child wants more of something specific?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B4. Does your child do certain things that attract your attention to them, even if they aren’t purposefully trying to get your attention?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C. Does your child intentionally show you that they don’t want a certain activity or thing?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C1. Does your child intentionally show you that they don’t want a certain activity or thing?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C2. Does your child intentionally show you that they want more of an action that you have just stopped doing?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C3. Does your child intentionally indicate that they want you to perform a new action?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C4. Does your child intentionally show you that they want more of something after already having some of it?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C5. Does your child intentionally make a choice between two or more items that you offer at the same time?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
C6. Does your child intentionally show you that they want a new object that is within sight, hearing or touch, but that you have not offered?
C7. Does your child intentionally request things that are not present in the immediate environment?
C8. Does your child intentionally attract your attention?
C9. Does your child intentionally demonstrate affection toward you or anyone else?
C10. Does your child intentionally indicate hello or goodbye when someone arrives or leaves?
C11. Does your child intentionally offer things or share things with you, not expecting anything in return?
C12. Does your child intentionally direct your attention to something that they are interested in?
C13. Does your child sometimes intentionally use polite forms of social interaction such as asking you for permission before doing something, indicating ‘please’, ‘thank you’, or ‘excuse me’?
C14. Does your child intentionally indicate ‘yes’ or ‘no’ or ‘I don’t know’ in answer to a question?
C15. Does your child ask you questions (no necessarily using words), clearly wanting an answer from you?
C16. Does your child name or label objects, people or actions, either spontaneously or in response to a question from you?
C17. Does your child spontaneously provide information to you about things in the form of comments?

4. When you are presented with the question. You will be able to answer either:
• No: in which case, you will be taken to the next page or

• Yes: in which case, a drop down selection box will appear where you will be asked how the student demonstrates these behaviours. It will look something like this:

**Emerging:** Behaviours are used inconsistently or only when prompted or encouraged. They are used only in one or two contexts or with only one person. E.g. greeting others is considered emerging if the individual only greets their father.

**Mastered:** Behaviours are used independently most of the time, when the opportunity arises. They are used in a number of different contexts, and with different people. For example, greeting others is considered mastered if the individual greets family, friends, and unfamiliar people.

6. If you answered questions in Section A or B, when you have finished completing the questions in that section you will be asked something like this:

You can save a matrix at any time, regardless of whether you have completed it or not. You may resume it later and you have 30 days to complete and/or edit it.
If you feel as though your child demonstrates more abilities or behaviours which you did not answer questions about, have a go at answering the questions from the next section!

7. You’re now finished! Go and ‘View my profile’.

**VIEWING, EDITING AND DELETING THINGS:**

This is the student’s communication matrix ‘account’. Each student should only have **ONE** of these. If you have an existing student, find where the student’s original account and click **start a new assessment**. That way, you can simply find the student’s account and see the list of matrices completed every year.
HOW TO UPLOAD COMMUNICATION MATRIX ONTO ONESCHOOL

Student’s communication matrices need to be uploaded onto OneSchool as part of ongoing evidence that they are working at the General Capabilities Level. To upload the communication matrix onto OneSchool:

1. **Email results:** This allows you to email the matrix to other teachers or parents.
2. **Editing the account:** This button allows you to edit the child’s personal details NOT the matrix results.
3. **Deleting Individual:** This will delete the child’s account and all matrices associated with it. This is good for if you want to delete a duplicate account.
4. **Deleting the matrix:** This will only delete the matrix.
5. **Deleting Individual:** This will delete the child’s account and all matrices associated with it. This is good for if you want to delete a duplicate account.
6. **Email results:** This allows you to email the matrix to other teachers or parents.
7. **Edit:** This will edit the matrix.
8. **Finish:** This means that you have started a matrix and haven’t completed it yet. Please complete it within the next 30 days.
1. Once you have the Communication Matrix in front of you, simply press ‘print’ → select ‘PDFcreator’ under Printer → press ‘Print’ → Save file as ‘Students name_date of matrix completion’ (E.g. JohnSmith_24082015) → upload onto OneSchool.

2. Next, provide anecdotal evidence to support why this student is working at this level. You should include anecdotal evidence on:

   • What does the student communicate for? (To protest during PE? To request a motivating toy?)

   • How does the student communicate? (E.g. Student communicates using whole body language? Gestures? Single words for motivating activities? Echolalic speech outside of context?)
[Appendix 3] – WSSSS Student Communication Profile: Example 1
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Diagnosis/Medical Condition/Important Note: Intellectual Disability (ID)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Physical Impairment and Hearing Impairment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Cerebral Palsy and Spastic Quadriplegia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Non-verbal communicator</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**2015 Class/ Teacher**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MYP/ Yura Pak</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Assessment used:**

Communication Matrix (November 2014): Level 3 unconventional communication to Level 4 conventional communication

Blanks Levels of Questioning (November 2014): Unable to respond to Level 1 questions

**Communication System – 16 Cell PODD**

- Owned by: school
- Programed by: teacher
- Recommended by: CPL SLP
- How it’s being used: Modelled by a communication partner at school
- Frequency of use: Morning circle/playgrounds

**Communication skills:**

**Student understands**

Holly is able to understand some daily routine instructions in class with visual supports.

**Student communicates by:**

- you interpreting her body language/ actions
- using gestures such as pointing
- pointing to 1 symbols

**Student communicates to:**

- tell you when she wants her toys / tell you when she wants you to stop
- ask and/or answer questions
- say hello to you in the morning

**Student makes choices by:**

- reaching out/selecting between two symbols
- communicating ‘yes’ and ‘no’ by nodding her head for ‘yes’ & she will not respond to ‘no’

**These visuals help student in the classroom**

- Her communication device
- Choice-making board/area
- Visual timetable
- First/then cards

**ICP Goal**

- Literacy Level 1C – Comprehending texts / Composing texts
  - Learning expectation: Holly will use her PODD book to request an item with a range of people at school.
  - Strategy: Small group setting – 1:1 and less distraction if possible, model and encourage the use of PODD book, provide Holly with opportunities to use her PODD book on a regular basis

**PDP Goal**

- Expressive and receptive language
  
  Holly will use an Aided Language Stimulation Board to ask for desired activity

**Targeted area/ Program/Activities**

- Playtime activities – choose an activity (e.g. colouring, blocks, books)
  - Model the use of PODD book – each activity page

**Behavioural considerations**

Holly has trouble with transiting from a preferred activity to a non-preferred activity.
[Appendix 3] – WSSSS Student Communication Profile: Example 2
## [Example 2] 2015 WSSSS Student Communication Profile – Andy C (DOB: 25.02.03)

**Diagnosis/Medical Condition/Important Note:** Intellectual Disability (ID)

- ASD
- Half day schooling at WSSSS
- Verbal communicator

### 2015 Class/ Teacher

- JSYP/ Yura Pak

### Assessment used:

- Communication Matrix (May 2015): Level 6 Abstract Symbols
- Blanks Levels of Questioning (November 2014): Level 1
- CELF-4 (August 2014): severe receptive and expressive language difficulties.

### Communication System – 20 Cell PODD

- Owned by: school
- Programed by: teacher
- Recommended by: communication teacher
- How it’s being used: Modelled by a communication partner at school
- Frequency of use: Morning circle/literacy sessions

### Communication skills:

#### Student understands

- Andy is able to understand routine based classroom instructions in class.
- Andy is able to answer simple questions related to here and now.
- Andy is able to understand simple 1 step instructions
- Andy has difficulty understanding language concepts commonly found in classroom. e.g. First – Next – Last, Before – After

#### Student communicates by:

- simple gestures
- turning my head away/putting my head down on my desk when I don’t want something
- mainly with one to two word utterances

#### Student communicates to:

- To make choices
- To request attention
- To greet people
- To direct your attention to something
- To answer ‘yes’ and ‘no’ questions
- To ask questions
- To name things
- To refuse and reject something

#### Student makes choices by:

- by verbally telling you
- These visuals help me in the classroom
  - His communication device
  - Choice-making board/area
  - Visual timetable
  - First/then cards

#### ICP Goal

- English – Different Year Level – Partial (Prep)

#### PDP Goal

- Expressive and receptive language
  - Within natural contexts throughout the day, Andy will use the PODD communication book to construct 2-3 symbol sentences.

#### Targeted area/ Program/Activities

- Examples of communicative functions and intents:
  - requesting objects/action/activity
  - expressing an opinion

#### Behavioural considerations

- Andy doesn’t initiate a lot of conversations but I will respond to your questions with simple yes and no or using two words utterances.
- When Andy has difficulty answering open-ended questions, try asking him a forced choice question.
- At the moment, Andy learning to communicate ‘when something is wrong’ using a PODD book
- You can help me by modelling and giving me some time to respond
### [Example 3] 2015 WSSSS Student Communication Profile – Sam J (DOB: 21.01.06)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Diagnosis/Medical Condition/Important Note</th>
<th>2015 Class/ Teacher</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intellectual Disability (ID)</td>
<td>JYP/ Yura Pak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Assessment used:**
- Communication Matrix (May 2015): Level 7 Language and above
- Blanks Levels of Questioning (May 2015): Level 2
- CELF-4 (February 2015) – Severe receptive and expressive language difficulties.

**Communication System – Verbal Communicator**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Communication skills:</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student understands</td>
<td>• Sam is able to understand basic classroom instructions by anybody.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Sam has difficulty following 2 – 3 steps instructions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Sam has difficulty understanding language concepts commonly found in classroom. e.g. First – Next – Last, Before – After</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Sam has difficulty understanding complex sentence types. e.g. Passive sentences, sentences with clause</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student communicates by:</td>
<td>• using 3-4 word utterance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• mostly using key words in my sentences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Sam may have difficulty with answering complex questions providing responses, descriptions and opinions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Sometimes his speech can be unclear.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student communicates to:</td>
<td>For a range of communicative intents:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>to protest, request and provide information, communicate socially</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student makes choices by:</td>
<td>by verbally telling you</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>These visuals help me in the classroom</td>
<td>• Visual timetable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• First/then cards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICP Goal</td>
<td>• English – Different Year Level – Partial (Prep)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**PDP Goal**
- Expressive and receptive language
  - For Sam to be able to retell a short story by retelling the key elements of the story with visual support. e.g. Who, where, problem solution
  - For Sam to be able to remember the key element of the story with visual support.

**Targeted area/Program/Activities**
- during 4 Blocks Literacy / shared reading time

**Behavioural considerations**
- Sam prefers talking with adults as he has difficulty interacting with his peers.
[Appendix 4] - WSSSS Boardmaker Plus Symbol Dictionary for Core Vocabulary (Example)
# Communication Passport

## Hi, I'm Tom.

### How I Communicate
- I use PECS as my form of communication.
- I am currently working on Phase III.
- I have my own PECS book with my own communication symbols.
- Please only let me use the symbols in my book so I don’t get confused.
- I am good at requesting what I want.
- I will also let you know when I have had enough by saying and signing finished.

### My favourite things
- I love the computer, iPad and Interactive Whiteboard (IWB)
- I love adult interactions
- I love Intensive Interaction
- I love to read at my desk (but please let me chose my book)
- I like to have massages and tight hugs

### Things that help me
- I need to have structure.
- I need support with all my activities.
- Please leave me alone when I am having an outburst.
- If I am unable to calm by myself when I am having an outburst please take me outside with a chair and let me sit there for a bit (but please don’t leave me I like to know you are there).
- I wear a helmet for transitions.

### Things about Me
- I live at home with my mum, dad and younger sister.
- I have a pet cat at home.
- I love technology.
- I can be very affectionate.
- I love to put items in my mouth and chew them (please be aware what I put in my mouth).
- I love positive attention.

### Things I'm good at
- I am good at working with adults
- I like to work with Max and Josh
- I am good on the computer and games on the IWB

### Tricky Things
- Please limit my time with technology.
- Don’t give me technology without one to one support as I can become anxious.
- I can get silly when I don’t have structure.
- When I get silly please direct me back to my desk and give me calming items.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>CLASS ACTIVITY / OBSERVATIONS</th>
<th>RECOMMENDATIONS</th>
<th>FOLLOW UP REQUIRED</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 21.07.15   | SLP conducted:                                                                               | Follow up with a couple of one hour sessions this week. Sessions may look something like this:  
| 9-10am     | • Interactive story                                                                         | • Session 1:                                                                    | Victor:  
|            | • ‘We are roaming in the forest’ w/ blanks levels of questions                               | o ‘We are roaming’ w/ blanks levels of questions                                | Programming words into Victor’s iPad.  
|            | • Language concept activity ‘top/middle/bottom’.                                             | o Language activity with top/middle/bottom                                        | Consider putting in:  
|            | Tom – whilst Tom has some good expressive language skills, his understanding of questions    | o Categorising animals – farm animals vs rainforest animals.                      | • Animals that you are learning in class                                            |
|            | is limited and often does not respond to the question appropriately.                         | • Session 2:                                                                    | • Concepts that were discussed during the language group: eg.                      |
|            |                                                                                              | o ‘We are roaming’ w/ blanks levels of questions                                | Top/middle/bottom,                                                               |
|            |                                                                                              | o Categorising animals – farm animals vs rainforest animals.                    |                                                                                   |
|            |                                                                                              | o ‘Where is it’ activity                                                        |                                                                                   |

**Tom** - an area that you can consider working on is his understanding of questions. This can be targeted during shared reading time. Let’s discuss more about it next week.
## [Appendix 7] - Terminology

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ALS</td>
<td>Aided Language Stimulation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICP</td>
<td>Individual Curriculum Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PDP</td>
<td>Personal Development Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PECS</td>
<td>Picture Exchange Communication System</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PODD</td>
<td>Pragmatic Organisation Dynamic Display</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SGDds</td>
<td>Speech Generating Devices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SLP</td>
<td>Speech Language Pathology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WSSSSS</td>
<td>Western Suburbs State Special School</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>