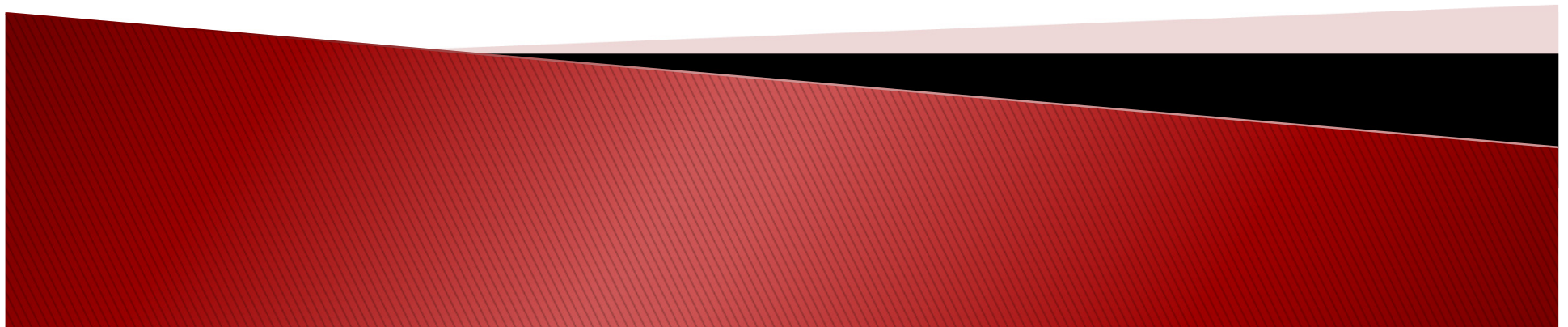# AGOSCI CONFERENCE Thursday 18th May

Jacinta Xavier

Does a whole school focus on communication and MML systems build literacy?

About the school:

▸ Red Hill Special School: a Queensland Department of Education and Training school campus

▸ Located five kilometres from the Brisbane GPO

▸ We provide highly individualised programs for children and students with complex educational needs.

▸ Our programs cater for children and students from birth to school leaving age.

▸ ECDP – 30 children

▸ P – 12 – 65 students

Communication plan

How we started....

We needed a way to:

- Prioritise students for SLP service and support
- Show development and skill acquisition of students with CCN
- Track students progress in the areas of communication and literacy
- Look at school wide processes of recording student data that could be easily shared with all staff.

Levels of communication competence

What we did:

- We met as a Leadership Team with our SLP
- We looked at the Dynavox InterAACt framework and adapted this to suit our students and context
- We defined 4 levels of communication ability and interventions for students at RHSS
- We met with teachers to assign a level to each student
- We used our Federal Government funding (Investing for Success) to fund extra SLP and Literacy consultant support
- We decided on a whole school approach to modelling language (PODD)

- Over the last 12 months we have refined these levels and made the definitions clearer with input from SLP and Literacy Consultant

RHSS Communication Level 4

Whole school communication system – Informal Communicator

▸ **Student:**

- Primarily uses informal communication e.g. facial expressions, vocalisations, body movements
- No reliable yes/no, informal and inconsistent
- Communication success relies heavily on communication partner

▸ **Communication Environment:**

- Modelling whole language system (PODD/P2Go) for receptive and expressive communication
- Communication is multimodal
- Establishing a recognisable yes/no response by attributing meaning and shaping student responses
- Communication is recorded in a RHSS PCI form
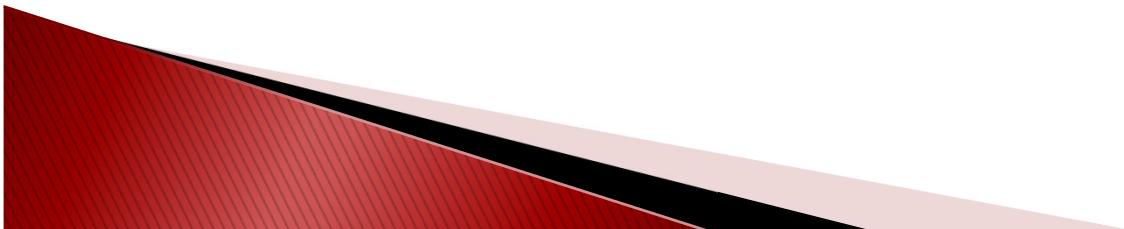
RHSS Communication Level 3

Identifying an individualised communication system – Emergent Communicator

▸ **Student**

- Communication attempts are more recognisable in engaging activities
- Performance with AAC is inconsistent
- AAC use can be fleeting and variable
- Consolidating a yes/no response

▸ **Communication environment**

- Modelling whole language system (PODD/P2Go) for receptive and expressive communication
- Communication is multimodal
- SLP meets with teacher, family and others to identify process for determining individualised communication system. This may include classroom observations, data gathering, completing a Pragmatic profile etc.
- Communication success relies heavily on the communication partner
- Communication is recorded in an RHSS PCI form

RHSS Communication Level 2

▶ **Student::**

- Has an identified individualised communication system which they are learning to use across all environments and with a range of communication partners
- Consolidating a consistent yes/no response
- Has reliable symbolic communication dependent on partners or contexts

▶ **Communication Environment**:

- Modelling whole language system (PODD/P2Go) for receptive and expressive communication
- Communication is multimodal
- Family/carers actively access training/support to use the communication system
- Family/carers model the communication system
- Student requires extensive modelling of the communication system
- Communication is recorded in an RHSS PCI form
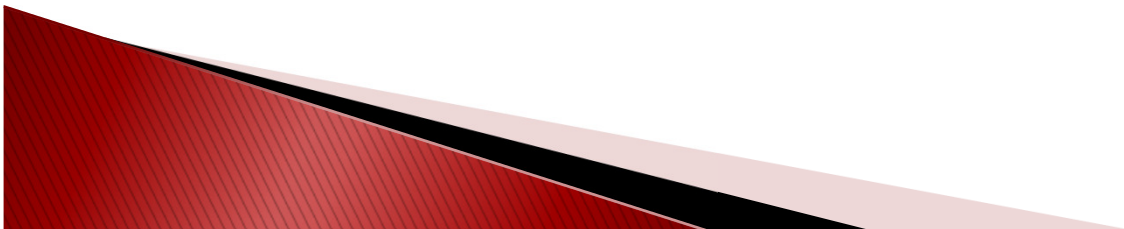
RHSS Communication Level 1

Individualised Communication system – Independent Communicator

▸ **Student:**

- Has a functional and individualised communication system that facilitates vocabulary and syntactic growth at home and school
- Is consolidating being able to say anything to anyone in any context
- Can access their communication systems as independently as possible
- Backup communication systems are in place if preferred options are unavailable

▸ **Communication Environment:**

- Modelling whole language system (PODD/P2Go) for receptive and expressive communication
- Communication is multimodal
- Communication is recorded in an RHSS PCI form
- It is clear how and when teachers and significant others need to use the communication system to model linguistic competence
- Communication is recorded in an RHSS PCI form

Displaying the Data – Data Wall

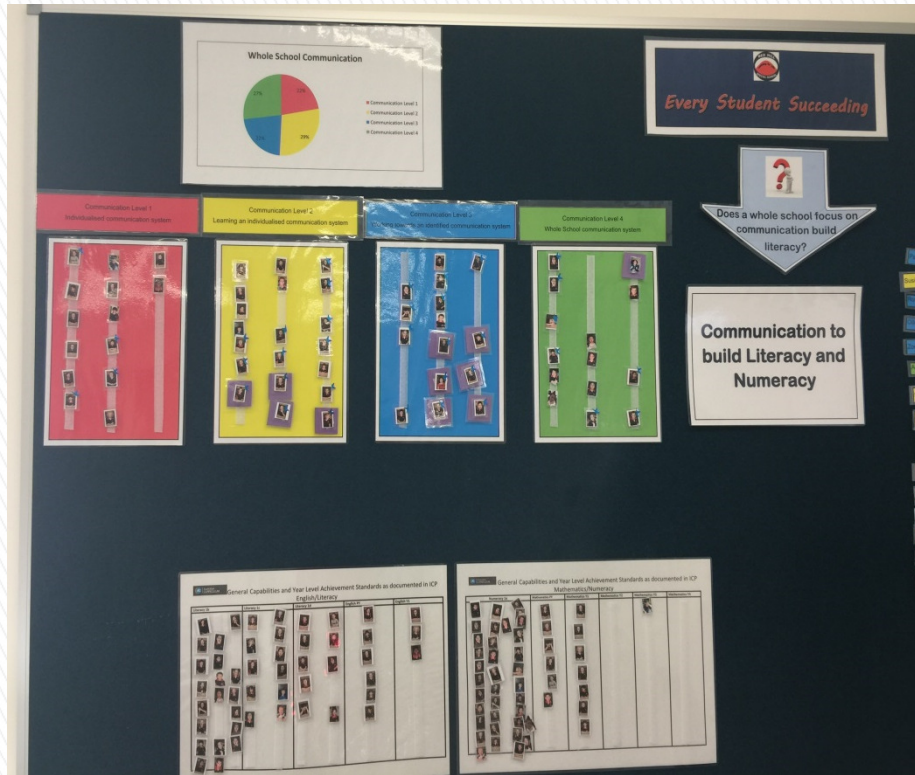# Data wall: Does a whole school focus on communication build literacy and numeracy?

Displays the following information on every student in the school:

- Their communication level
- Where they are working at in relation to literacy (Emergent, transitional and conventional)
- Where they are working on the Australian Curriculum
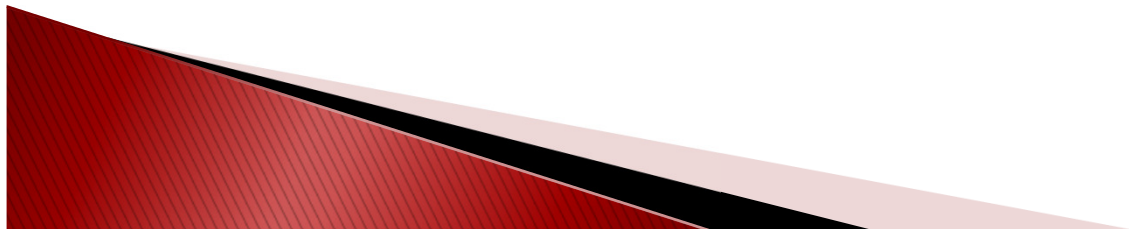
Using the Data – Data wall

Communication Levels
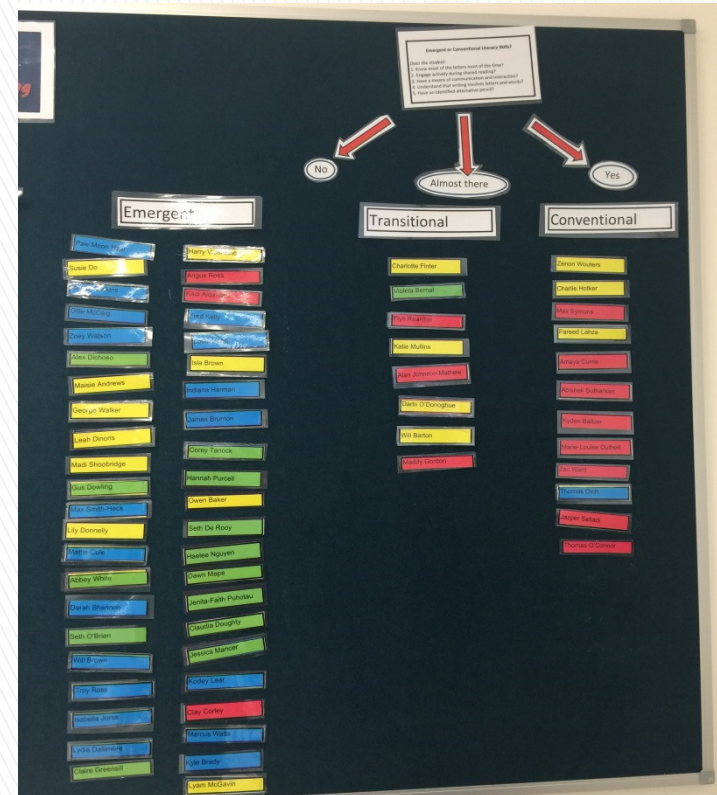
Literacy Data

Communication levels

- This data determines SLP prioritisation
- Meetings with families, SLP and teachers
- Parent Training
- Teacher Training

Literacy Data

- This data determines targeted literacy interventions
- Class programs
- Support to teachers

Using the Data – Data Wall

Staff Discussions – Does a whole school focus on communication build literacy and numeracy?

- Staff meetings – regular discussions of students and their data
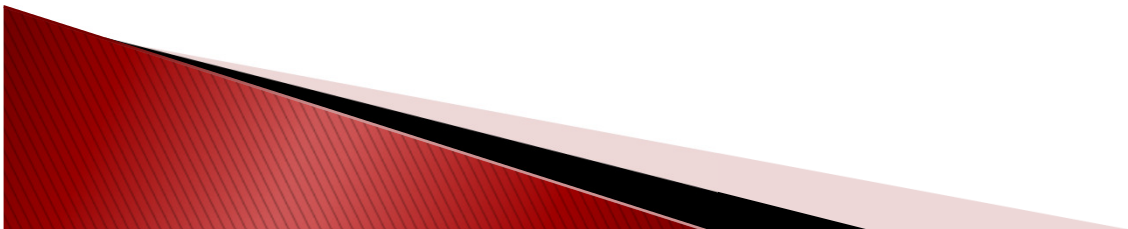- Individual meetings with teachers and the Leadership Team to discuss student data
- SLP uses this information to inform planning and interventions
- An overview at a glance for all staff
- It is located in the staff room so all staff can easily access the information
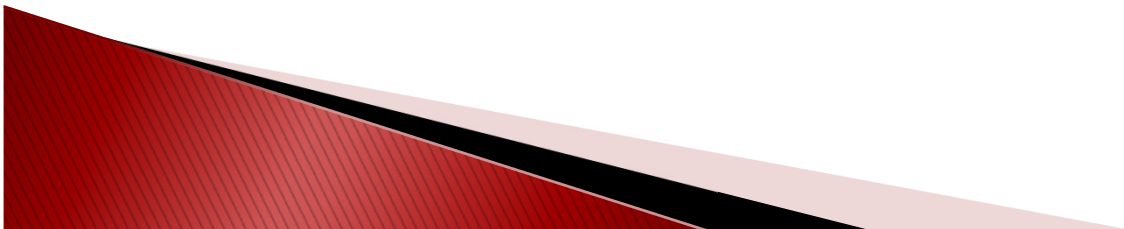
In summary:

Defining and using communication levels at RHSS has provided all staff with:

▸ a more systematic approach in which to target and support students communication
▸ Targeted use of school resources
▸ More efficient SLP prioritisation process
▸ A way of discussing meaningful communication data for each student
▸ A meaningful way to engage with families and support them in their child's communication journey (parent training and meetings)

- Having a strong focus on communication and literacy including having a school wide approach to modelling a whole language system has increased the receptive language and engagement of many of the students at school.
- We are seeing a positive effect on both staff and students.