Beginning The Journey
"Building A Communication Community"

"We Are Narbethong"

A short film by Hunter Tait
Narration by Kerry Tait, Deputy Principal

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2014

Discussions with admin team regarding need to change culture and belief system.

Staff survey at the end of 2014 identified:

- Most staff had little knowledge about formal communication systems

- Staff felt that students should leave school being able to use a yes/no if physically possible

- Students communication goals concentrated on vocalisation-babbling; babbling chains; intonation patterns

- There was a strong belief by staff that a student's communication ability and cognitive ability were related to their level attained on the Functional Scheme (assessment for Active Learning) regardless of the physical capabilities/challenges due to their cerebral palsy.

- PD by PT(Kym Morris) and AVT-PI (Lee Withall) to help staff understand the impact a physical impairment has on learning.

End 2014

GRG (Greater Resources Guarantee) funds were applied for to begin our journey to **Create the Cultural Change Necessary to Create a Communication Community**

- More Speech Therapy time
- Upskill staff

If you focus on *results,*
you will never change.
If you focus on *change,*
you will get results.
~ *Jack Dixon*

Primary goal for Leadership Team was and still is – "a cultural change"
A change in the way we use communication in the school, our expectations of the students, our knowledge of communication and most importantly how we create a language learning environment and provide opportunities for our students.

Major Building Block

We needed to understand that our students are "not developmentally delayed but developmentally different." This is related to movement being different rather than being delayed-applies to students with movement disorders (CP) and VI.

- This was crucial for cultural change and underpinned a change in expectation of students.

- How was this going to happen?

- Staff already had great knowledge about their students regarding vision but we as a school needed to understand our student as learners.

Slide 1

We needed to learn that movements or other challenges can mislead us as to the student's interest or engagement or ability.

We should never judge by Appearances

Who You Gonna Call?

When you want the best to do PD on communication? You call Gayle Porter!!!!

The 2 day workshop at Narbethong SSS focused on
•" PODD for Students with Severe Vision and Movement Challenges"

•saw video examples following students from early intervention to teenage and to some cases adulthood to show the growth in communication was not hindered by a lack of vision.

•Gayle followed up this workshop with 2 visits –first in 2015 and then in 2016.

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Prerequisites for AAC ?

- in recent years there has been a strong move away from the idea of "candidacy for AAC"

- research does not support the idea of someone being "too something" for AAC or "not ready" for AAC

- people excluded from AAC were often also excluded from experiences, instruction & practice necessary to improve capabilities

➤ We needed to build in strategies based on the student's **needs for today** while building **future capabilities for tomorrow**

- In 1993 Pat Mirenda described breathing as the only pre-requisite relevant to communication.

Melissa Bates Kerrie McLean "Comm. Tools and Strategies", 2013

Strategy-Partner Assisted Scanning

- Auditory scanning-totally blind students
- Auditory-Visual Scanning-for students with some residual vision
- Removed the need to visually shift gaze and for communication to be only limited by vision.
- Eliminates the need for communication success to be based on symbol recognition

Slide 5

A key strategy is modeling.

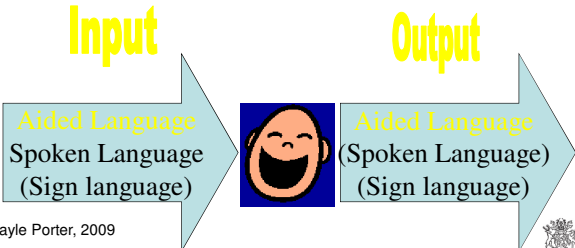The student needs to see/hear other people using their system.

Everyone learns how to "model" – how to interact and chat using aided symbols, (and speech)

Focus on interaction

Aided language acquisition

p. 65

- The language learning environment

Input

Output

Aided Language
Spoken Language
(Sign language)

Aided Language
(Spoken Language)
(Sign language)

Gayle Porter, 2009

Made resources

- Developed classroom books for all classes for teachers to learn to scan with and for students to use.
- Books available in the classroom
- Books travel with students
- High contrast
- 2 books: 9 cell high contrast and one symbol per page.
- Began with the belief-"No pre-requisite for AAC " and with Pat Mirenda's words ringing in our ears-"The only pre requisite for AAC is breathing".

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Training Communication Partners

•Parent Information morning and hands on modelling session

•Full day PD for AVT-VI's who were working with SLPs in schools within the State.

I C.A.N. communicate
at Narbethong

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Modelling

- Staff were encouraged to video themselves using PODDs in interactions with students
- Staff responded well to this and found the videos a valuable learning tool.
- As some students began to use the books, it created a sense of excitement and positivity within the school.
- The students who began using the books were younger students as well as upper school students.
- It was the change in these students that had a significant impact on the cultural change.

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Total School Accept/Yes and Reject/No Program

- In conjunction with the music teacher, created songs for accept/yes and reject/no - as a school teaching these head movements for yes/no became a priority.

- All staff talked, slept, dreamt about accept/yes and reject/no. We could hear our words being echoed all over the school…
" I'm watching your head to tell me yes or no. Chin on chest for yes-side to side for no".

- It was amazing how many students with complex physical needs and VI quickly learnt these simple movements recognizable by anyone in the community. Staff soon began expecting the movements when interacting with the students.

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Regular Follow Up

After each visit to the school, regular emails to-
- Reinforce the total school goals
- Thank all staff for the great work and commitment
- Relate the positive things seen in the school and the good news stories.
- Suggest new activities that classes could use when focussing on the skills we were trying to develop.

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Gayle Porter – 3 day visit August 2015
Visited all classes, giving feedback to teachers
Recommendations from the visit:
➤ Documenting student initiations and how students communicate accept/yes and reject/no
➤ More individual communication books
➤ Teach movements for communication
➤ More direct and indirect modelling

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Outcomes from staff survey in Term 3 2015

- Increase in staff knowledge of PODDs from beginning to the end of the year.
- Increase in staff confidence
- Daily use of books rated as "Often"
- Number of books were sufficient in their classrooms and the type of book was appropriate.
- PODDS were travelling outside the classroom
- Teachers knew the difference between a direct and full model

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Outcomes from staff survey in 2015

- Other staff such as PTs, OTs, Admin were not confident in using the books
- Overall staff did not know how students were initiating communication
- Suggestions from feedback included
  – More time with SLPs
  – More time to practice modelling
  – How to develop language learning environments
  – Continue to video sessions for peer learning
  – How to reinforce at home

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Term 4,2015

- We worked with teachers focussing on documenting student initiations and how students accept and reject
- Information was put into a template and displayed in the classroom

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Slide 1

Dylan	When you see me (see below) it means "I have something to say". Please get my/class communication book and follow the directions. •Vocalise •Teach hand up or tap???	How I say Accept and Reject (Yes/No) •"yes"-head nod or look toward partner •"no"-head shake •Not consistent-partner may need to prompt Dylan "I'm watching your head to tell me yes or no"

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Slide 2 — Assessment and Data Collection

- As with any project of this nature, **assessment** needed to be done but deciding what tool to use was difficult.
- Our students have significant VI-most blind; complex physical and movement challenges and cognitive and learning challenges. Many have significant medical challenges and health issues that make accessing the learning potential they have difficult to maximise-for some students we have small windows of opportunities.
- We needed an assessment that recognised all of these elements and that did not require or assess a student based on a motor response.
- We cannot assume that a motor response or rather a lack of motor response is the same as a cognitive response.
- From research across other special schools, the Communication Matrix appeared to be a logical choice as it is widely used for similar students.

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Slide 3 — However?????

- The manual states- "may not be suitable for students with vision impairment" and this assessment uses " a staged approach based on typical early communication, gestural and spoken communication." (Gayle Porter –response to ACARA-1st draft)
- The question remained-Would our students be seriously disadvantaged by assessing them on a language assessment that uses test items involving vision or movements they could not do?
- Students with motor challenges and complex communication needs often need acknowledgement that their movements and communication follows an atypical pathway.
- These students may acquire symbolic language communication using AAC systems before demonstrating intentional language through gesture.
- It was decided Communication Matrix was not appropriate.

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Slide 4 — So What To Use?

Class teachers completed the Pragmatics Profile of Everyday Communication Skills
for Emergent Communicators by Dewart and Summers (1995)
November 2014
November 2015
November 2016
•No age scores and looks at functional language and pragmatic use of language.
•Divided into Receptive and Expressive Language
•Student's responses recorded and not compared to developmental scales.
•The responses for each student are scored and placed on an excell spreadsheet so that we have a record for
long term progress and data for planning future targeted goals.

Slide 5

Communication Assessment in Preschool Children with Physical and Multiple Disabilities

Gayle Porter

Cerebral Palsy Education Centre Communication Resource Centre, Scope
Melbourne, Australia
Research supported by

Speech Pathology
Australia,

Teresa Iacono

Centre for Development Disability Health, Monash University Communication Resource Centre, Scope
Melbourne, Australia
Agosci, Melbourne 2007

Slide 6 — Pragmatic profile - Adaptations

- Forms of communication used for each intention ranked 0-5 based on most independent mode reported

  0 – function not observed
  1 – informal modes not directed to partner
  2 - Informal modes directed to partner
  3 – Conventional gesture
  4 – Whole word mode
  5 – Sound /letter mode

Assessment/Data Collection

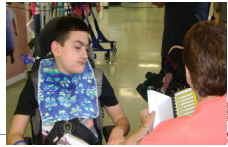Used our new electronic version of the Pragmatic Profile, and Gayle's scoring system to score the profiles and enter the data excel spreadsheet created for us.

- Each student has individual spread sheet that will record expressive pragmatic functions throughout school or for at least several years.

- Admin. felt it was more important to have data that was reflective of the students ability and gave us information for teaching and learning rather than collecting data for data's sake- as Communication Matrix would have been.

- We cannot do whole school data from this but this is not seen as an issue.

Examples of Pragmatic Profile

Jarrod BG - 2014-2016
Pragmatic Profile of Early Communication Skills in Children - Revised Edition
(Dewart & Summers 1995)

G Porter, T Iacono, Communication Assessment in Pre-school children with physical and multiple disabilities, AGOSCI 2007

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Examples of Pragmatic Profile

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Research indicates

A communication book alone is not a guarantee for success-even if a
student has a communication system and uses AAC they can still be-

- A passive communicator
- Initiate few communications
- Respond infrequently
- Produce limited messages
- Have restricted vocabulary

Metropolitan Region Information Sheet for data Outcomes for AAC Survey for 2015 Stats for SLP's.
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Success of a System

- Study by Johnson (2006) which has been supported by other studies
indicated that the success or abandonment of an AAC system depended on
a complex network of factors.

- The factors that promoted long term success included-
1. Support and use of the AAC system
2. Attitude of the family, student, school and communication partners
3. System characteristics and fit.

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2016

- Gayle's visit in March
- Working on students having individual books
- Training new staff
- TA making more staff books (OT/PT/Admin/Groundsman)
- Family involvement and family training
- Facilitating communication opportunities outside the classroom
- Continuing to teach movements for communication
- Assessment/Data Collection in October/November
- Further staff training around the Pragmatic Profile
- Continuing to link communication
- strategies to Active Learning

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At a Class Level

- Each class now has new expanded class books-vocab specific for individual classes.
- General books in most areas of the school
- Making more individual books-books for across all age ranges
- Continued to have Parent Information days with practice modelling sessions
- Regular Newsletter Articles   I C.A.N.
  I communicate at Narbethong
- Continued to model in classrooms, video

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"The Wheel Chair Adventure"

What next?-moving into 2017

- Continue to upgrade class books and make more individual books
- Continue to model and upgrade staff skills and include families more.
- Find new ways to collect data especially whole school data.- FCCS (Functional Communication Classification System-CPL Qld).???
- Series of videos to demonstrate the variety of modelling strategies
- Communication policy

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2017

- We have 6 new teachers out of 16 classes and several new program assistants.
- Many of our program assistants have learning to use the PODD's as a focus of their Developing Professional Framework
- We are revising basics-carrying PODDs everywhere in and out the classroom and indirect and direct modelling.
- Continue to examine how we organise our day so we can continue to provide as many language learning opportunities as possible.

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How do we measure the school's success?

There is now a communication system in operation in the school and we have a total school plan for communication and consistent strategies.
Communication/ICP goals incorporate use of pragmatic functions and have use of PODD as receptive and/or expressive language strategy.
Through my observations working in classrooms:
•Teachers are using PODDs in the classroom for modelling to build receptive language
•Teachers responding to student initiations
•Teachers are able to give information on how students initiate and how students communicate accept/reject
•Teachers asking SLPs for specific support to incorporate PODDs in class activities to establish language learning environments-celebrating more self initiated communicated messages.
•More group sessions
•No more "chat" about babbling!
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Are We There Yet?

- In a word-NO
- Are we nearly there? NO
- Are we further along than we were 3 years ago? YES!
- BUT-we have not reached a point of sustainability-the "tipping point"

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Continued Support

- This journey for students, families and staff continues and will continue because of the support and belief of the Principal, Anne Nystrom and Deputy, Kerry Tait-the Admin has invested heavily in our belief that this is the path forward and in professional development to make the cultural change a reality.
- The understanding of our admin team to believe in our students and in the importance of this cultural change has been vital in our progression so far. They are supportive in trying to make things happen while always understanding that different people are always going to be on different points on the our road.

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So our Journey Continues With Our End Goal For Our Students In Mind-

"Being able to say-

What I want say to,
To whoever I want to say it to,
Whenever I want to say it,
However I choose to say it."

•Gayle Porter
Gayle Porter, Melbourne, Aust.

"Learn By Doing"-Narbethong State Special School