



Whole school approach to language immersion using AAC

Liesl Harper: Saturday 20 May 2017
AGOSCI



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



About the school:



- Intellectual disability
- Multiple disabilities
- Complex health needs
- Cortical vision impairment
- Complex communication need
- AAC users
- Learners

About the students:



Backstory ... once upon a time



4 Blocks – Balanced literacy approach



Aha!- the really big Aha

Aim: to explore how one school is working on a whole of school approach to teaching communication to students with multiple disabilities and complex communication needs



Research

- Hetzroni, O. E. (2003). A positive behaviour support: a preliminary evaluation of a school-wide plan for the use of AAC in a school for students with intellectual disabilities. *Journal of Intellectual and Developmental Disability*, 28(3), 283-296. doi: 10.1080/1366825031000150955
 - Study - PBIS intervention as a whole school approach
 - Outcome – increase in communication and decrease in behaviour issues
- Norburn, K., Levin, A., Morgan, S., & Harding, C. (2016). A survey of augmentative and alternative communication used in an inner city special school. *British Journal of Special Education*, 43(3), 289-306. doi: 10.1111/bjse.12142
 - Study – survey of staff use of AAC in a special school
 - Outcome – clearly identified barriers to AAC use, staff confidence and priority placed on it in school. Further research -
- Dodd, J. L., & Gorey, M. (2014). AAC intervention as an immersion model. *Communication Disorders Quarterly*, 35(2), 103-107. Retrieved from www.naecv.org/vc
 - Social theory of language acquisition
 - Create an immersive language-rich environment based on the child's AAC system

The gap - Research on whole school approaches?

- *What are the affordances of a whole school approach to language immersion using augmentative and alternative communication for students with multiple disabilities and complex communication needs?*

My research Q



- School leadership
- Building staff capability
- Communication-friendly environment
- Supporting students with CCN
- Engagement with parents, families and the community

www.thecommunicationtrust.org.uk/commitment

Action Plan

- Determining a vision for communication in the school
- Include actions around communication in school planning documents
- First agenda item on leadership meetings is Communication
- Process for prioritising SLP resources
- Financial resources – Professional development, School PODD's, P2Go

School Leadership

- Staff professional development
 - PODD training
 - Instructional coach - PODD
 - Master teacher – Literacy
- Annual Performance Development Plan
- Staff meetings – first 5 mins
- PODD pizza and patty cakes

Building team capability

- Good communication partners
- AAC accessible environment
 - Chat now board
 - Yes / No
 - Communication Plan
 - 20 cell PODD
 - Individual communication systems

Communication friendly school

- Communication accessible environment
- Good communication partners
- Whole school models language using AAC
- Every student – Personal communication information
- SLP prioritisation
- Highly individualised communication systems
- Communication passport for school leavers
- Data wall to determine interventions
- Numeracy and AAC
- Aided Language stimulation

Supporting students

- Parent training sessions
- Community service program
- SLP meetings with family and teachers
- Newsletters – communication focus
- ICP's – communication agenda
- PODD's available for families

Engagement with families and community

- Child-centered
- Natural, meaningful contexts
- Smart communication partners
- Whole school policy for AAC use
- Communication plan/policy
- Address the input/output dichotomy

Language immersion approach in school

We believe communication underpins all areas of curriculum and daily life, and that all students have the capacity and the right to communicate, and to be engaged in genuine opportunities to learn to communicate whether through spoken language or some form of augmentative and/or alternative communication e.g. picture symbols, signs or speech generating devices (see *Communication Bill of Rights*).

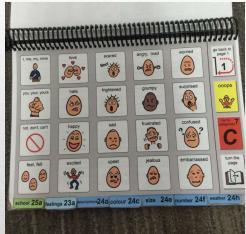
Red Hill Special School Communication Plan (2016)

Communication plan



You need to tell me – YES or NO

Whole school communication : AAC



Input = Output: everybody wears 'Chat Now' and 'Yes/No'



Community



Communication is for everywhere and in every activity!



Modelling AAC



Never miss an opportunity to chat!



Picture symbols for curriculum access

RHSS - PODD

PODD and Proloquo2Go – first 5 mins of every staff meeting

PODD and PIZZA – staff training

Balanced Literacy Approach

Alternate pencils

- Every student succeeding
- Sharp and narrow focus
- Explicit improvement agenda
- Communication to build literacy and numeracy
- Does a whole school focus on language immersion using AAC build literacy?

The DATA wall!

Displaying the Data - Data Wall

Communication levels **Literacy Data**

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.

How we started....

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 4

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 3

Learning an individualised communication system – Context Dependent Communicator

- 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 2

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
 - Model the students individual communication system
 - 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

RHSS Communication Level 1

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)

In summary:

- 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.

Positives...

- Smart communication partners
- Making decisions about Teacher AAC voice when teaching class who all have individualised AAC systems
- Teaching for expressiveness while still building receptive language
- Keeping up the momentum
- Sharp and narrow focus



Future directions

Thanks to the RHSS staff for all their hard work on our communication and literacy journey!



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Standing on the shoulders of giants