

**SPEECH PATHOLOGY & COMMUNICATION IN AN INCLUSIVE CLASSROOM
DOWN SYNDROME VICTORIA – EDUCATION CONFERENCE 2016**

When we consider the average teaching and learning interactions that occur repeatedly during every school day, language is the core means by which this interaction is facilitated. Communicative exchanges occur repeatedly and facilitate both teaching and learning outcomes as well as social-communicative interactions. The opportunities to facilitate improved language and communicative competence occur naturally during day to day activities. We just need to be aware of them!!

When we consider the communicative needs of students who have an intellectual disability, we need to initially focus on the following questions:

- Is there a desire to communicate?
- How effective is the student’s current means of communication?
- Is a range of communicative intents being demonstrated?

Is there a desire to communicate?

- a lack of any desire to communicate should be rare in students who are attending school.
- it would be expected that the student is at least seeking food and drink or at least wanting to be left alone.

How effective is the student’s current means of communication?

- communication is dependent on the efficient use of symbols, e.g. words, gestural signs, pictographs and photos.
- a student may be demonstrating an intentional communicative behaviour but the means may not be appropriate, e.g. taking your hand and showing you a book to request you read it rather than asking you to read it, pointing to a photo to meet this need or signing for this purpose.
- Situations where there is an obvious intent to communicate but an inefficient or inappropriate means should be a priority to change.

Is a range of communicative intents evident?

- we communicate for various reasons including the following:

○ requesting an object	○ requesting assistance
○ greeting and farewelling	○ protesting and complaining
○ seeking attention	○ gaining information
○ providing information	○ labelling and naming

- if there is a limited range of intents, we want to expand the student’s communicative use by targeting ones rarely noted or not evident.

Select the “Right” Goal

- Based on what the needs of the students are in the classroom and school setting.
- When someone communicates for them or predicts their needs when they could reasonably communicate this independently.
- Analysis of communicative behaviour in the classroom / school setting.
- Observe and “assess” Semantic – Syntactic (Grammatical) – Pragmatic Language abilities
- Apply the SMART Goal Strategy ..

Specific	Measureable	Attainable	Relevant	Time-bound
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- Identify goals consistent with Victorian Early Years Learning & Development Framework / Victorian Curriculum F-10.

Examples of Relevant Targets (Please Note: This list is not comprehensive and other language abilities may be more appropriate)

Vocabulary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Aim to expand students’ understanding of Tier 2 type words as you come across them in books being read or in activities being introduced. ○ Tier 1 / Tier 2 examples .. walk / stroll; fast / rapid; think / consider; noisy / booming. ○ Encourage students identify Tier 2 words and place them on the wall. ○ Scaffold students’ ability to explain the word meaning; link the word to a Tier 1 synonym ; assist them to use the Tier 2 word in a sentence. ○ Review the Tier 2 words for a few days . ○ Encourage use of a Tier 2 Wallchart words in all students’ writing.
Following Directions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Basic One Step: get the book/ give the book to Mary / put the book on the table ○ Complex One Step: Put the new book in the red box ○ Two Step Directions: get the book and put it on my table ○ Two Step Directions with Sequence: put the ball in the box then get your book. ○ Monitor use of gesture as students may follow the directions because of your gesture not your words.
Concepts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Quantity: more .. less .. one .. all .. “rest” (numeracy) ○ Sequence: first .. last .. middle (literacy) ○ Spatial: top .. middle .. bottom (literacy & numeracy) ○ Size: large .. small (literacy)

<p>Response to Questions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Wh-questions: what .. what doing .. where .. who .. why. ○ Yes / No Questions ○ When reliable with three or more, begin to target responses to a sequence of 3-4 questions (i.e. early stage “to and fro” conversation)
<p>Expressive Language</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Use of two, three and four clause elements sentences, e.g. I - am going - to the Office; the girl – went – home – on the bus. ○ Use boxes to visually cue students to provide the necessary meaning elements. ○ Compound Sentences, e.g. the boy is kicking the ball and the girl is catching it. ○ Complex Sentences, e.g. she is happy because it is her birthday. ○ Other specific targets: questions; pronouns; verb tenses. ○ Model .. expand .. “correct” .. if done consistently during day to day interactions, modelling, expanding and “correcting” will occur hundreds of times per day. <p>Student: that’s a car Response: That is a car in the carpark</p> <p>Student: him go table Cue: he is going to his table</p>
<p>Pragmatic Language (Social Language)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Eye Contact. ○ Greetings and farewells. ○ Responding to questions and requests. ○ Turn-taking in a conversation. ○ Gaining and sustaining attention.

Factors to Consider with Intervention

Many language goals can be incorporated into activities already occurring within the classroom. The following are general factors that need to be considered:

- Are the **frequency** and **duration** of the teaching and learning interactions adequate to facilitate students’ learning of knowledge, ideas and strategies?
- Will students have sufficient opportunity to explain or show what they have learned and how they will have to demonstrate this knowledge?
- Will students have sufficient opportunity to **recode** and **review** what they have learned so the required depth of their learning is achieved (i.e. conceptual not rote)?
- Distributed practice may be a better option .. more frequent shorter practice times rather than a single longer practice block.

- Ensure multiple examples are incorporated into activities as soon as possible to facilitate “generalisation”.
- 1:1 or Small Group .. there is some research support for the view that well designed small group interventions (i.e. 3-5 students) may work equally as well as 1:1. Small groups within the classroom could be considered.
- 1:1 or Small Group will be dependent on the ability being targeted.
- Ensure students are aware of the practice period, i.e. use visual scaffolds so they know how long they have to go or how many more items they need to complete. Make sure they know how these visual scaffolds will work.

Speech, Augmentative or Alternative Communication

- Augmentative Communication: use of a gestural signing, a PODD communication book or an electronic communication device when the students cannot convey messages successfully by speech.
- Alternative Communication: use of a non-vocal communication system as achievement of intelligible speech will never be successful.
- Aim should be to achieve communication through speech at least partially.
- Selection of an augmentative communication option or options needs to be informed by students’ needs, e.g.
 - ✓ Signing will be useful with most communicative partners only if transparent signs are being used. The greater the need for opaque signs, the more shared knowledge of signing will be required by the communication partner.
 - ✓ Electronic communication devices with voice output which could include the iPad with relevant apps may be of limited value in the playground.
 - ✓ Use of these devices will also more limited when they have been “packed in the school bag” at the end of the day or when the battery has been “depleted”.
 - ✓ Use of PODD communication books may also compromised in similar situations.