Report for Investing in Schools Speech Pathology Support | 2018 | Calamvale Special

Executive Summary

In 2018 funding provided was through Invest for Schools. Calamvale Special School purchased 0.1 extra SLP time to support the school in the areas of:
- Developing a more communicatively accessible environment in the school
- Increasing teacher capacity as communication partners for students with complex communication needs (CCN)
- Resourcing and developing more individual personalised communication systems for students

Tracking Progress

Information was gathered around meeting support goals through:
- Pre and post teacher surveys around being a communication partner and communicatively accessible environments
- School based questionnaire around observable school behaviours in a communicatively accessible environment
- Tallies of student AAC systems and yes/no accept/reject skills
- Observations of the physical school environments for AAC, and student communication initiations

Support Provided

During 2018 the SLP provided training for staff in communication partner skills, modelling in classrooms of communication systems, coaching for school staff in CCN, resourcing for individual AAC systems, video multimodal communication modelling, assessments and reporting, communicative environment support (eg core vocabulary boards, portable robust AAC) and access to SLT consultancy. Teacher aide time also targeted communication skills in the classroom with specific student goals.

Outcomes
- a shift in the observable behaviours of a communicatively accessible school as indicated from the checklist results, particularly in the areas of student interaction with AAC and developing knowledge
- an increase in the amount of personalised AAC systems from 18 (Feb) to 33 (Nov) out of the 74 students who require them
- an increase in the amount of students who now have a recognisable yes/no accept/reject response (from 60% to 78%), and the number of staff who recognise yes/no gestures
- an increase in staff knowledge and confidence in using AAC systems with students with CCN
- an increase in the understanding and development of a communicatively accessible school by staff

Areas that need continued focus are: training in AAC competencies as communication partners, having AAC accessible at all times by everyone, social interactions with AAC, and parent/home engagement with school AAC.

Challenges
- while there is a definite increase in yes/no accept/reject responses, more than 20% of students still are not clear with this gesture which can impact upon their community access
- more than half the students who require an individualised robust AAC system do not have them (although they have access to school systems)
- after a four year commitment to purchased SLP time within the school, Calamvale Special has decided not to continue with extra SLP time in 2019. This can have a potential impact upon SLP time for modelling, coaching and dynamic assessment/resourcing for students with CCN and school based projects

Recommendations

It is recommended that Calamvale Special School:
- continues to prioritise communication as a fundamental skill for students and staff as students with CCN continue to find their voice and use it in their varied environments
- continues training, coaching and modelling as a valuable means to support students, as highly competent communication partners support student communication. This area of service delivery should be continued with SLP support
- continues to resource for individual robust AAC systems and continues with classroom based intervention, and home follow through
- continues to focus on literacy and social skills alongside communication as students become more independent communicators
- continues collecting data around communication using evidence based practice assessment tools
- has clear and agreed expectations around communication for students with CCN and accompanying pedagogies

Catriona Pine | Speech Language Pathologist | Calamvale Special School

Full Report

In 2018 funding was provided to schools as part of a four year initiative to improve student outcomes. The target areas this year were Communicative Environments and Increasing Teacher Capacity. Calamvale Special School used part of their funding for an additional 0.1 FTE per week of speech pathology support, employing the existing Speech Language Pathologist.

As part of the Investing in Schools submission 2018 part of the funding was identified for:
- Providing targeted communication teaching for identified students, and increase the ratio of personalised AAC systems for students
- Enhancing communication partner support and training so they are aware of their role in interacting with students with complex communication needs
- Ensuring the environment at school supports AAC accessibility at all times

Intervention Plan

The area of focus for the SLP in 2018 was Building a Communicative Environment, and Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) across all year levels with students who required support. The use of this time focused on:
- Classroom language sessions focusing on modelling AAC systems in conversations, play and shared activities
- Provision of resources around robust systems in the classroom and around the school
- Development of school individualised core vocabulary boards to be utilised in different environments across the school eg playgrounds, eating areas, office, library
- Provision of appropriate AAC support for each student requiring this means of communication
- Modelling with teachers and teacher aides use of AAC in the classroom and the community
- Modelling Auslan and PODD books during literacy sessions, videoing multimodal books and morning sessions
- Continuing development of yes/no nodding/shaking for communication across environments
- Professional development with teachers and teacher aides targeting communication partner skills, both with the school Speech Language Pathologist and with outside expert consultants
- participation in professional development activities by the SLP, including ISAAC conference and mentoring with Haylee Parfett (SLP PODD consultant)

Teacher aide time with a specifically trained teacher aide was also utilised.

*See Appendix A and B for school goals and SLP goals for 2018.

Assessment – Pre and Post

Data was gathered to track progress in the areas of Communicative Environments, Communication Partner knowledge and student AAC system use by:
- staff surveys
- tally of robust AAC systems used, and personalised
- tally of students using yes/no nodding/shaking
- some individual assessments of students and use of AAC
- observations of physical school environment
- data observed of number of student led initiations in a class session
- Communicative Environment survey completed by administration team and SLP

Communication goals for each student were identified, and communicated with teachers and parents. These communication goals also informed Individual Curriculum Plans.

Goals of the speech pathology support included:

Developing classroom resources
- Ensuring each student has appropriate communication system to participate – PODD, iPad, verbal, PECS, ALS boards, Auslan
- Ensuring each teacher had appropriate communication systems to model
- Developing core vocabulary boards for classroom and playground environments
- Support for literacy activities

Modelling of strategies in class
- Classroom modelling of communication systems use through play and language sessions
- Classroom implementation of conversational activities to explicitly teach skills
- Classroom coaching support for communication activities with teachers and teacher aides
- Individual support for students with communication skills and generalisation
- Specific skill building for students around 'I've got something to say' initiations. Modelling for staff on observing initiative behaviours in students

**Capacity building of teachers and teacher aides in AAC**
- Multimodal communication afternoons with school SLP
- Teacher and teacher aide training and upskilling in using AAC (6 training afternoons in 2018. Topics included: Take Your Talker, Student Initiations and Observations, Using Proloquo2go, Advanced PODD, Personalising PODD and Proloquo2go, Being an Amazing Communication Partner, Core Vocabulary, Switching Support)
- Continued development of short AAC training videos 'Having a Conversation', 'Talking with my PODD', 'Multimodal Stories', 'Multimodal Mornings'

Outcomes

At the end of 2018 there have been ongoing improvements across the school in using AAC, particularly in the areas of communicative environment, communication partner knowledge/support, development of robust communication personalised systems and using yes/no.

AAC outcomes

Working with students and teachers/teacher aides in the classrooms developing and practicing AAC has resulted in steady improvements in the number and use of personalised AAC systems. At the beginning of 2018 18 out of the 74 students who required personalised AAC systems had them, and at the end of 2018 33 out of 74 students had systems specific to their needs. This has been developed with consultation with families, and with support from resourcing within the school. However, there continues to be more than 40 students who require a personalised system, which may increase with student enrolment in 2019.

Number of personalised AAC systems for students who require them for Calamvale Special in 2018
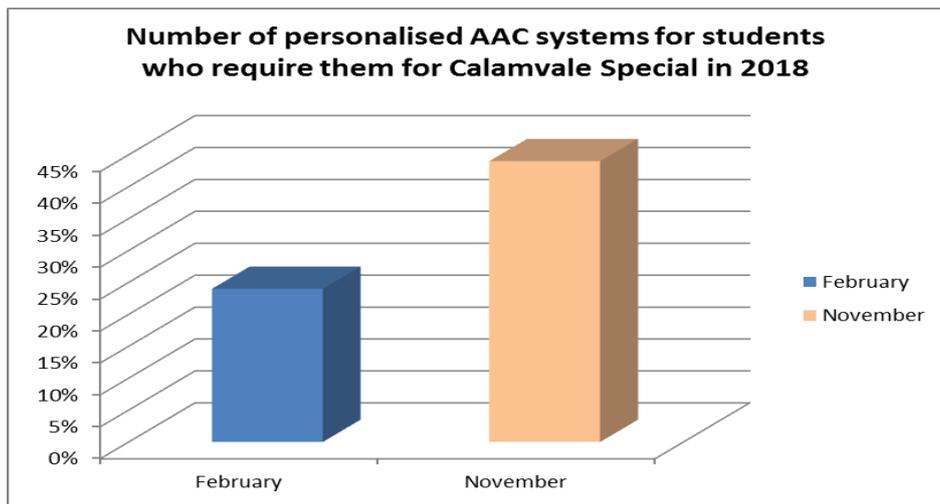
Having a personalised AAC system, whether it is an iPad/Dynavox with proloquo2go, proloquo4text, PODD compass, or a personalised PODD book, eye gaze system or another device is vital as a student can develop and practice their own voice across environments such as school, community and home.

Students require four areas of competencies to increase successful AAC use (Light 2012)
- Operational competency (how to turn it on, navigate, charge, volume, trouble shoot, access method)
- Linguistic competency (what vocabulary to use, sentences, categorisation, symbol knowledge, receptive language)
- Social competency (who to talk with, conversations with a device, turn taking, communicative confidence)
- Strategic competence (how to use limited language to convey messages, compensatory strategies, trouble shooting)

Students using AAC at Calamvale Special need to integrate these four areas to become communicatively competent, and within class work with the SLP and teachers has covered this during 2018. There has been a definite shift in specific student competency in their own AAC systems, where some students are seeing their system as their voice and are carrying it everywhere.

Additionally, these competencies will develop more strongly within social interactions with motivating communication partners in natural environments. This has led to a strong focus on using AAC in conversations, chatting, community access and across a range of communication partners.

As the student use of communication systems and engagement in learning has increased, the emergent and conventional literacy skills of the students has also continued to increase. Communication supports literacy, and literacy supports communication. For non-verbal students, literacy is particularly relevant, as it is a way to access the curriculum and their world. A student who is able to read and write can say anything they need to say.

Student ability to use yes/no accept/reject nodding/shaking has also improved during 2018. The ability to use a non-verbal nod/shake for a yes/no has significant impacts in the community for a quick response to an enquiry, as it a universally recognisable gesture. Students with all levels of impairment can be explicitly taught movements for communication including nodding/shaking accept/reject. It is important to make sure the yes/no responses are in context and make functional sense.

78% of students at Calamvale have a consistent yes/no at the end of 2018. However, there continue to be more than 20% of students who require explicit contextual learning of accept/reject for clear communication and community access. This can impact upon their communicative access in the general community, as yes/no tends to be a universally acknowledged gesture.

12/12/2018

It is interesting to note that at the end of 2017 65% of students were able to use yes/no (as opposed to 35% at the beginning of 2017), so there continues to be a steady increase over the last two years of more conventional gestural/natural accept/reject responses among the students.
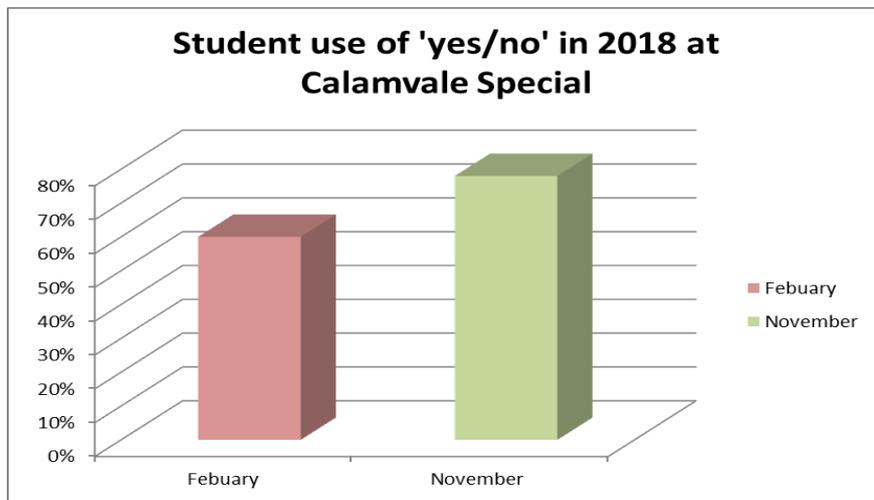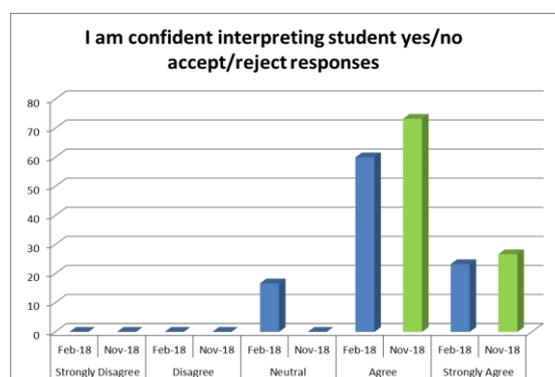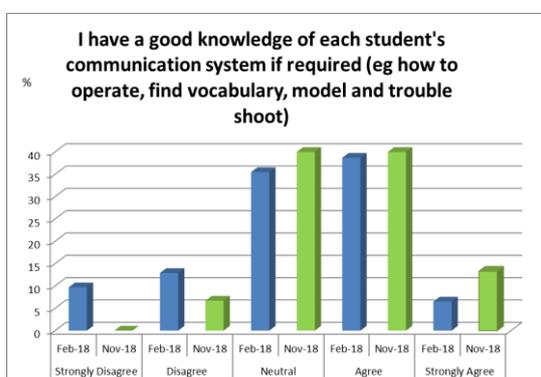

Work in the area of communication systems needs to continue to ensure oral/AAC language continues to develop to support literacy and social learning.

Staff Survey outcomes – Communicative Environment and Communication Partner

Staff were surveyed in Febuary 2018 and November 2018 around their knowledge of AAC, Communicative Environments and Communication Partner skills.

When analysing the survey results, there has been a positive shift in the knowledge around:
- What is a communicative environment
- What AAC systems students are using and how to trouble shoot
- Understanding how to be a communication partner and giving extra time to students with complex communication needs, not interrupting an AAC user
- Observing and acknowledging student initiations for communication, including body movements or specific 'I've got something to say' behaviours
- Interpreting yes/no accept/reject responses. Increased interpretation and acknowledgement of accept/reject yes/no has resulted in increased student usage of these conventional nodding/shaking behaviour, as noted above

There continues to be some more work needed in the space of:
- Training in AAC competencies – staff do not see themselves as competent AAC users for modelling as communication partners

- Having AAC systems accessible in all environments and at all times. This is confirmed by school 'walk throughs' – students/staff often do not have their systems available in different environments eg playground, eating areas (although core vocabulary boards have been placed in these spaces)
- Having social chat and conversations with AAC users, staff continue to feel this is an area for growth
- Being confident in knowing what questions and comments to use to elicit conversation with an AAC user

Some of the biggest facilitators to communication and use of AAC at Calamvale Special in 2018 (as reported on the survey) include:
- Easily available SLP support in classrooms and for consultancy
- Communication core vocabulary boards in different environments
- Trained staff and students as communication partners
- AAC being accessible, portable and easy to transport
- Modelling from others, personal practice
- The need to communicate with students

Some of the biggest barriers to AAC use with students with complex communication needs (as reported on the survey) are:
- Lack of experience, confidence and time for AAC
- Different pedogogies across the school
- Practicalities of using AAC in playground, PE
- Operational competence with systems, navigation

Solutions to ensure every students voice is valued and accessible in all environments at Calamvale Special suggested by staff on the survey include:
- More training in the variety of communication systems
- Take your talker wherever you go, possible different levels of devices (high tech, low tech, simplified) in different environments
- Encourage everyone to be 'ready to listen'
- Whole school focus and parent engagement
- Communication practice with peers in groups, social, natural interactions
- Joint understanding with all staff around the validity of all means of communication

Understanding of Communicatively Accesible Environment
Calamvale Special 2018

Observations across the school environment over 2018 have indicated a shift in staff awareness and capacity to provide a communicative environment. There are some teacher aides who consistently provide access to AAC systems to students in all environments and ensure PODD books/iPads/talkers are carried with the students. Core vocabulary boards in outside environments have made communication more accessible in the playground, pool, office, eating areas, opshop and library. Teachers are ensuring systems are available in classrooms, and modelling conversations/social interactions using AAC. Staff have undertaken training around communication partner behaviours (observing, listening, responding, modelling). A video has been provided to encourage taking your AAC device everywhere. Social interactions are encouraged and monitored with a variety of communication partners.

However, this continues to be an area for improvement. Ensuring every student's voice is valued, accessible and modelled is a challenge our staff continue to face. Student's with complex communication needs require more language, not less. Encouraging staff and students to continue to have natural social interactions modelling and using AAC and other forms of communication is vital.

Observable Communicative Environment School Behaviours Checklist Outcomes

Calamvale Special administration team and SLP completed the School Observable Behaviours Checklist for Communicative Environments provided by Haylee Parfett (Communication Consultant) in July 2017, February 2018 and November 2018. This checklist targeted areas at a whole school level, and teased out the opinions and reflections of the administration team around communication in the school.

In July 2017 Calamvale Special School performed strongly in the areas of policies and procedures and resources around communication, and required more support and engagement in the area of developing knowledge and interaction. Strategies at a whole school level have been implemented across the last 18 months, including:
-   Training for communication partners from internal staff (SLP, other staff) and external consultants (PODD workshop, Literacy Intensive)
-   Deliberate focus on social interactions for communication practice with staff and students
-   Including a student goal for communication on OneSchool reporting procedures, goals developed in consultation with SLP
-   A specific focus on developing a Communicative Environment across the school (see above comments)
-   Shared understanding with staff around communication expectations, assessment and goals clearly articulated
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Areas for continual improvement as indicated on the checklist from November 2018 are:
-   Parent engagement and carryover of communication systems at home, parent education
-   Students with Complex Communication Needs having leadership positions
-   Continued support for literacy and communication
-   AAC accessible and available at all times
-   Values around communication access and support shared by all staff

12/12/2018

- Students using AAC to engage in small talk and social interactions

Communicative Environment Observable Behaviours Checklist - Calamvale Special School
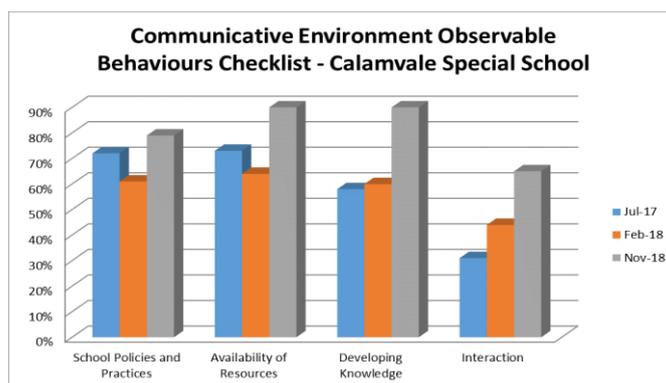
Other goal outcomes

Modelling and coaching by the SLP in classrooms has been an integral part of the implementation of AAC support and developing communicative environments at Calamvale Special. Following modelling of a session, for example, resources and implementation strategies were provided. Teachers were able to adapt and implement strategies for their students, as well as support communication systems in curriculum activities.

Teacher feedback has indicated that SLP classroom support and modelling is an effective and efficient use of SLP time. Strategies modelled by the SLP can be implemented across the week, and communication systems support is vital for students who are developing communicators.

Teacher Aide follow-up for communication support in the classrooms has also been a vital part of successful increase in student communication in 2018.

Student communication Snapshots were developed for each student to support with transition of communication systems into new classrooms. Communication Passports were developed for students who are moving out of school and into post-school options.

Challenges

- while there is a definite increase in yes/no accept/reject responses, more than 20% of students still are not clear with this gesture which can impact upon their community access
- more than half the students who require an individualised robust AAC system do not have them (although they have access to school systems)
- differing pedagogies and communication AAC expectations within the school impact upon modelling AAC for students and uptake of robust communication systems
- after a four year commitment to purchased SLP time within the school, Calamvale Special has decided not to continue with extra SLP time in 2019. This can have a potential impact upon SLP time for modelling, coaching and dynamic assessment/resourcing for students with CCN and school based projects

Conclusion

The Invest in Schools SLP and communication teacher aide support during 2018 has made a significant difference in the communication development of students with complex communication needs, as indicated by the pre and post data gathering process.   Particular areas of improvement include; engaging students in learning, ensuring more students have personalised communication systems, teacher/teacher aide knowledge and confidence in using AAC, social interactions using communication systems, development of a more communicatively accessible environment, and development of yes/no skills.

Partnering teachers with supporting, coaching and resourcing is an effective use of SLP time in a school environment.

There are also ongoing challenges working with students with complex communication needs and the staff who support them, including coaching/modelling time available, training, resource availability and clear pedagogical frameworks with high expectations for communication.

Recommendations and Future Directions

- It is important to maintain consistent and **regular support for multimodal communication** by the school SLP as students' transition into different environments.
- Ongoing and continued **professional development** for staff in AAC.
- Develop a culture of '**having access to communication systems at all times'** eg carrying PODDs, iPads with proloquo2go/Compass, Auslan training
- **Specific individual student goals**, data gathering and communication support with well-trained communication partners
- Continuing **development of literacy** to support communication
- Many students require ongoing work with **social competence** when using their AAC system eg when asking questions, initiating communication, and with general conversational skills
- **Resourcing** and exploring AAC systems for academic learning eg eye gaze devices
- Continued **data gathering** around AAC use and communication in the school environment, looking at assessment suitability
- **Partnering with families** to support students on their communication journey
- **clear and agreed expectations** around communication for students with CCN and accompanying pedogogies

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Speech Language Pathologist

References

Parfett (2017) Communication Accessible Schools Observable Behaviour Checklist

Firth,G., [2004] A Framework for Recognising Attainment in Intensive Interaction, Leeds Mental Health NHS Trust

Light, J (2012) Building Communicative Competence with Individuals who require AAC: ASHA presentation

Appendix A

Invest for Schools SLP Goals 2018 - Calamvale Special School

Goal	Measure	Strategies for Implementation
1. **Support development of a Communicative School Environment**	Teacher survey on environments Communicative Environment School Checklist Observations in classrooms	Resourcing of AAC systems Training in use of AAC systems Staff encouragement
2. **Knowledgeable and confident communication partners for AAC users**	Self-reflection survey on skills as a communication partner	Training listening and observing skills, video feedback Modelling communication partner skills
3. **Continued personalised student use of AAC systems in class for a variety of communicative functions, with home/community generalisation**	DAGG-2 for selected students AAC Communication Needs Assessment for selected students Tally of personalised systems across environments	Modelling of AAC Ensuring personalised systems for appropriate students Encouraging home/school consistency
4. **Students use yes/no nodding/shaking appropriately for scanning or communication**	Tally of students in the school using appropriate yes/no response	Modelling use of accept/reject yes no, teaching body movements for yes/no (nodding/shaking) Using yes/no in context in interactions

Appendix B

Communicative Accessible School Goals 2018 - Calamvale Special School

(as determined by the Communication Accessible Schools Observable Behaviours Checklist completed Feb 2018)

1. **AAC accessible at all times and contexts in a Communicative School Environment**.
   a. Measured through observations + survey.
   b. Implemented through providing appropriate resources and training for all staff and students around communication (PODDs, visual schedules, core vocabulary boards, iPads, Auslan support, Blanks levels of questioning, Intensive Interaction), supporting moving AAC systems across environments
   c. Monitored by 'walk throughs' of school and 'success story' feedback, survey results
2. **Communication partners are actively aware of their role and have the skills to interact with students with complex communication needs (listening, attributing meaning, observing, building social opportunities)**
   a. Measured by classroom/playground observations in a specific time frame by trained observer, teacher and teacher/aide self-reflection of skills
   b. Implemented through training of communication partners – school staff
   c. Monitored through observable activities each term, self-reflection survey
3. **Students use AAC successfully in small talk interactions – 'I've got something to say'.**
   a. Measured during designated 'chat times' across the school – tallying number of times a student initiates a 'chat'
   b. Implemented through modelling by staff and encouraging student peer and staff interaction using AAC, Intensive Interaction, Auslan, verbal conversations. Training of staff on 'conversational chat' structure. Communication partners to be aware of student indicating 'I've got something to say' – using a consistent response (eg to hand up)
   c. Monitored by number of student 'chat' initiations

Expectations Matrix

	Classroom	Playground	Community	Transport	Other (pool, swing, admin, undercover)	Peers	Home
Resources	Communication Bill of Rights Visual Schedules Robust Communication systems for each student (PODD, proloquo2go, Auslan, verbal, devices) ALS boards Fundamentals of Communication (II)	ALS boards Generic PODDs Core vocabulary	Specific chat ALS boards Yes/no nod/shake	Situation specific symbols ALS chat boards Core vocabulary	Situation specific symbols ALS chat boards Core vocabulary	Communication systems – PODD books, Auslan, devices	Robust communication system
Behaviours of communication partners	Wait and Chat Knowledge of systems Modelling communication system Explicit system teaching	Wait and Chat Availability of systems	Modelling yes/no nod/shake	Using routine language scripts Wait and chat	Use system when explaining activities and managing students Acknowledge communicative attempts	'Chat time' in groups Learn each other's communication	Knowledge of system Availability of system Modelling in home context
Student expectations	Successful interactions across environments with different communication partners	Use of communication systems to requests and express feelings	Requesting and commenting appropriately in community environments	Responding to directions and interactions	Use communication systems to participate appropriately	Successful peer interactions	Communicate with family and friends using most easily accessible method