

## Whyalla Special Education Centre AAC/Communication policy

Students at Whyalla Special Education Centre (WSEC) communicate their needs in diverse ways including (but not limited to) gestures, facial expression, picture symbols, verbal and written communication. This is known as multi-modal communication.

Many students at WSEC have complex communication needs and require use of Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) to become autonomous communicators. An autonomous communicator is able to *“say whatever they want to say, to whoever they want to say it to, whenever they want to say it.”* (Porter & Burkhart, 2012).

Individuals learn to communicate through experiencing models of their language used to communicate, whether that be verbal communication or AAC. Individuals who are learning to use AAC to communicate require opportunities to learn their communication system before we can expect them to use AAC expressively. For some individuals, years of meaningful receptive input may be required before they begin to use the AAC system themselves.

At WSEC, educators are committed to supporting students with diverse communication needs to develop autonomous communication skills to support their full participation in education, employment, family and community life.

### Educators are aware of student communication needs

- Educators gather information about student communication needs and set goals for communication in the classroom using tools such as the Communication Matrix.
- Educators monitor student communication skills across a continuum: receptive communicator, expressive communicator, autonomous communicator. This information is displayed visually on a data wall.

Receptive communicator	Students who are not yet using a communication system themselves. These students require adults in their environment to model the use of a language system/ an AAC system to help them to develop both receptive language and expressive language skills.
Expressive communicator	Students who are using a language system/ AAC system themselves. Their communication may consist of single words/symbols or some word/symbol combinations. They may require co-construction from their communication partners to be successful. These students require continued modelling of their language system to continue building their receptive and expressive language skills.
Autonomous communicator	Students who use speech, AAC or a combination of both to communicate whatever they want to say, to whoever they want to say it, wherever they want to say it.

- Educators are aware of students’ individualised AAC systems. This information is displayed visually on a data wall.

**Educators set high expectations for students to become autonomous communicators and understand that the following strategies support students' success:**

- Access to comprehensive and individualised AAC systems
- Communication partners who consistently model real messages in real situations
- Multiple communication partners and modelling across different environments
- Responsive communication partners who can expand on the messages students communicate using AAC to support increased effectiveness of communication (co-construction)
- Responsive communication partners who assume competence and attribute meaning to communication efforts of early communicators

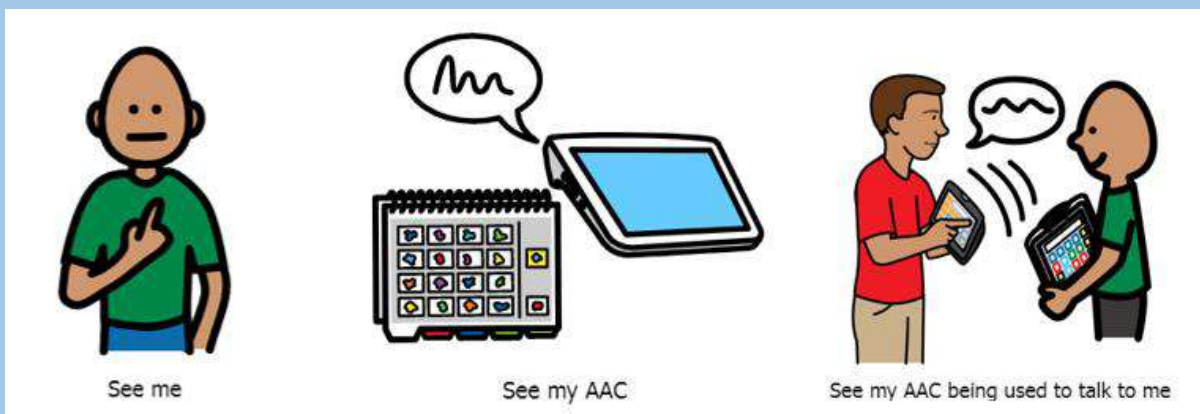
**Educators are competent and confident communication partners**

- When working with different communication systems, or access methods, educators work with the individual student's Speech Pathologist to use the communication system appropriately in the classroom.
- Educators access training and support to develop their own skills with AAC to become competent communication partners.
- Educators actively work to build their skills to increase their confidence in using communication systems.
- Educators ensure that AAC is readily available; educators have their AAC systems on them at all times including in the yard, during transitions and when off-site.
- PODD communication books are available for all staff. Single page opening, 2 page opening and at least 1x electronic PODD is allocated to each classroom.

**WSEC aims to be a communication accessible site and an effective aided language learning environment**

educators.

If you can **see a student**, you should **see their AAC system** and **see educators using their AAC** to talk to them.



Developed in consultation with Speech Pathologist Jane Farrall and Department for Education Speech Pathologist Kelly Falcione

Pictures sourced from: Boardmaker Version 7, 2021.

Porter G., & Burkhart L. (2012) The Roads to Autonomous Communication Using Aided Language. ISAAC Pre-conference.

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