



Communication and literacy, you can't have one without the other.

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Glenallen School, based in the eastern suburbs of Melbourne, is a school for students with a physical disability and/or complex medical need. We currently have 156 students, 75% of our students use AAC for comprehension and/or expression.

The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (Article 21), states that “People with a disability have the right to express themselves, including the freedom to give and receive information and ideas through all forms of communication, including... augmentative and alternative communication (AAC)”. A student can only become a truly autonomous communicator if they achieve literacy skills. To do this we must have a Communication Accessible School and a robust literacy model.

In this presentation we will illustrate how we use the Victorian Curriculum and ABLES to assess, plan and deliver a comprehensive literacy curriculum for students who use AAC.

Our presentation will include video examples of staff and students teaching and promoting literacy through AAC and will provide examples of assessment, planning and learning content. We will highlight the case history of two students:

- A six-year-old boy with cerebral palsy, complex communication needs and English as an additional language who uses a 20 cell partner assisted PODD book and a Tobii Dynavox eye gaze communication device.
- A sixteen-year-old boy with cerebral palsy and complex communication needs who uses an 80 cell partner assisted PODD book and an iPad with Compass App with PODD accessed via a single switch

To begin a literacy program, students are assessed using ABLES (Ability Based Learning Education Support) and placed within the learning continuum of the Victorian Curriculum Levels A to 10. This is moderated by a transdisciplinary team comprising of a teacher, speech pathologist, occupational therapist and physiotherapist. Formative assessments are used to determine the specific level of skill the student has in the areas of phonological awareness, concepts of print, alphabet knowledge and writing. Following this assessment, class literacy programs are developed based on the Four Blocks Model.

Concurrent to this, each student is exposed to a robust language system. Every classroom is provided with a 12 cell Glenallen PODD (Pragmatic Organisation Dynamic Display) book, which is modelled by all staff at all times.

Each student is also given a personalised PODD book. This is tailored for content, number of cells per page and access method.

Integrating the teaching of literacy and communication provides our students with the ability to become truly autonomous communicators.