



## Creating Cross-Curricular Communicators; Teaching AAC Across the Day

Bleeker O<sup>1</sup>, Francis E

<sup>1</sup>Frankston Special Developmental School

Frankston Special Developmental School (SDS) is a learning environment for children and young people aged 4 to 18 years of age who have a moderate to severe intellectual disability. The school's Strategic Plan reflects the learning priorities as outlined by its staff and parents; to develop communication skills, social competencies and increase independence for each of the students.

A number of students who attend Frankston SDS are functionally non-verbal. They do not have a means of independently communicating their wants, feelings or opinions. This presents a challenge across all areas of their development, in- and outside of the classroom. How do you teach a curriculum to students who cannot answer you? How do you know if they have understood? How do you begin teaching expressive communication to a teenager with minimal prior exposure to Multimodal communication?

Initially, Alternative and Augmentative Communication (AAC) was taught in dedicated sessions. This allowed teachers to work intensively on student communication skills in a structured environment. However, it was soon evident that students would require more opportunities to practice the use of AAC across a variety of settings.

As the school transitioned into a uniform method of curriculum planning, we designed and trialled additional supports to ensure communication is embedded in the planning of units of work from the very beginning. To develop these supports we asked ourselves; 'What words will my students need to participate in this lesson?' 'How will I present this information?' 'How will my students respond?' 'What tools do I need to provide my students?'. Answering these questions eventuated in the development of "vocabulary planners" and amended unit planners to facilitate planning for communication.

The outcome of our planning is a multimodal classroom where lessons are presented simultaneously in Auslan, are modelled on Proloquo2go whilst verbal instruction is provided. We have seen improvements in students' personal and social capabilities, communication skills, literacy skills and their overall academic learning and engagement.

This session will provide an overview of our experiences thus far, barriers along the way and our plans for the future.