Policy Statement
2013

Communication Policy
What is communication?

Communication is the process of exchanging views, feelings, information, knowledge and experiences. It takes a wide variety of forms, from two people having a face-to-face conversation through modes which include speaking, writing and gestures to highly supported interactions where a significant person facilitates communication or interprets the behaviours of an individual. The process of communication is what allows us to interact with other people; without it, we would be unable to share knowledge, experiences, make comments or make choices.

What do we believe?

At Mitchelton Special School, we believe that our understanding of each student’s communication development is fundamental to their acquisition of further skills. Teachers are committed to creating a total communication environment that promotes each student’s ability to use existing language skills, develop new skills and become active and engaged communicators.

At Mitchelton Special School we actively subscribe to the principles in the Communication Bill of Rights. We believe that all of our students have the right to develop his or her ability to communicate, at whatever level, and to be given the opportunity to initiate and respond in communicative interactions.

We believe that it is our role and responsibility to:

- create opportunities for communicative interactions for each student
- develop skill acquisition for each student
- document each student’s communication abilities/development by maintaining an individual student communication profile.

What do we do?

At Mitchelton Special School each student entering school that does not have a current speech-language assessment will be reviewed /assessed by the speech language pathologist so that baseline data can be collected to inform future practice. A prioritisation process will be used to identify students for SLP support. Classroom teachers are responsible for completing a service request forms for students requiring SLP assessment.

All students will have a profile collected using the Communication Matrix, (Charity Rowland, Oregon Health and Science University, 2010) or the First Steps Speaking and Listening Map of Development (W.A. 2nd Ed) Profiles will be updated during term three of each year and filed in the student’s main filing system.
At MSSS, communication is central to the whole curriculum. Pupils should be able to communicate in order to develop as individuals, to express themselves socially, emotionally and physically, to engage with others and to contribute as members of society. Pupils are given opportunities to engage with and demonstrate the skill of communication and to transfer their knowledge about communication concepts and skills to real life and meaningful contexts.

**Teacher responsibilities:**

1. To facilitate an environment conducive to the development of targeted language/communication skills for each student (e.g. by creating opportunities for students to initiate communication, practicing sentence structure, practicing articulation, developing an understanding of pragmatics)
2. To ensure that students who use specific communication devices (e.g. QWERTY board, PECS, VOCA iPad)
3. To model targeted interactive language in all aspects of the school program
4. To share knowledge with school staff about each student's mode of communication
5. To be supportive, understanding, flexible and respectful of communicative attempts
6. To create opportunities for fulfilling social engagement between communication partners
7. To support language with visual cues
8. To be responsible for identifying professional development needs

Each student from Prep (full time students) to students in the senior school will have a MSSS Communication Profile which describes their communication mode, behaviour and its' possible intent. This document will profile the student's communication abilities and development and will follow them through their schooling journey.

**Teacher responsibility:**

1. To update a Communication Profile for each student at the end of Term 3.
2. To ensure all students exiting school, have a MSSS Communication Profile that can be used by significant others, schools and post school agencies.

Each student will have a communication goal/focus in their Individual Education Plan (IEP). This goal will be developed with major stakeholders and will be reviewed by the team. (If a student is showing skills in using 'out of context' language in all domains of the Mitchelton Special School Communication Profile, a priority IEP goal may not be required, however a focus on developing communication skills will be documented in the student’s IEP curriculum plan). Teachers will collaborate with stakeholders to formulate and document a communication goal for each student.

The MSSS Framework for understanding communication development is described within three phases; pre-intentional communication, intentional communication and symbolic communication. We recognise that many of our students will move through different stages within these phases and that some of our students will develop a number of dispositions whilst remaining within a phase. Teachers choose the most appropriate tool, from the suite of assessment tools, to gather explicit information about a student’s communication development/skills.
### PRE-INTENTIONAL COMMUNICATION FORMS

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Level 1</th>
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<td>Intentional Behaviour</td>
<td>Unconventional Communication</td>
<td>Conventional Communication</td>
<td>Concrete Symbols</td>
<td>Abstract Symbols</td>
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#### COMMUNICATION FORMS

- Communicative behaviours could include tantrum like behaviours, screaming, throwing self on the ground, pulling hair in frustration, scratching and biting. They may smile and show interest in interacting by physical contact and remaining close, making and Maintaining eye contact.

- Unconventional pre-symbolic behaviours are used intentionally to communicate. Communicative behaviours are "pre-symbolic" because they do not involve any sort of symbol; they are "unconventional" because they are not socially acceptable and we continue to use them to accompany our language as we mature. The meanings of some gestures may be unique to the culture in which they are used.

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- "Concrete" symbols that physically resemble what they represent, are used to communicate. Concrete symbols look like, feel like, move like or sound like what they represent. Most individuals skip this stage and go directly to Level VI. For some individuals concrete symbols may be the only type of symbol that makes sense to them; for others they may serve as a bridge to using abstract symbols.

- Abstract symbols such as speech, manual signs, Brailled or printed words are used to communicate. These symbols are "abstract" because they are NOT physically similar to what they represent. They are used one at a time.

#### EXAMPLES OF COMMUNICATIVE BEHAVIOURS

- Communicative behaviours could include body movements, vocalizations, proximity to object (standing near the door to indicate out) facial expressions and simple gestures (such as tugging on people).

- Communicative behaviours could include pointing, nodding or shaking the head, waving, hugging, and looking to a person to a desired object (communication triad).

- Communicative behaviours could include using an object (such as a shoe lace to represent "shoes", nappy to suggest "time for the toilet"), "iconic" gestures (such as pattering a chair to say "sit down") and sounds (such as making a buzzing sound to mean "bee").

- Communicative behaviours could include naming of a person, object, or action in response to a question (What's that?) or to ask for something that is not present.

- Communicative behaviours could include providing information in the form of comments; combining two or more symbols or words to request (more swing), reject (no water) and to engage socially.

#### PROGRAMMING/ POSSIBLE

- Floortime (Greenspan) Hanen Program
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- Makaton signing Visual strategies including objects, remnants, photos, pictures
- Picture Exchange Communication, PODD
- Facilitated Communication Voice Output Aide
- Blanks Level of Questioning

#### ASSESSMENT & REPORTING

- Communication Matrix, Charity Rowland, Oregon University 2010 Early Social Communication Scales (Mundy)
- IPCA
- Communication Matrix, Charity Rowland, Oregon University 2010
- A CA Protocol for Symbolic Augmentative Symbols The Carolina Curriculum for Toddlers and Pre Schoolers With Special Needs
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- Speech language-Receptive & Expressive assessment tools A CA Protocol for Symbolic Augmentative Symbols Blanks Levels of Questioning The Carolina Curriculum for Toddlers and Pre Schoolers With Special Needs