

Reflections of 2018 'Investing for Success'

2018 SLP SUMMARY REPORT

Lidia Zappala and Kerrie McLean

Introduction

Narbethong State Special School provides specialist teaching for students with visual impairment and additional disabilities. The school caters for students from birth through the Early Childhood Developmental Unit through to graduating senior students at age 18 through the school program. Narbethong State Special School has a whole school approach to learning and the students are immersed in Active Learning – a pedagogy developed by Dr. Lilli Neilsen specifically for students with visual impairment. The philosophy of active learning is to give the child the opportunity to learn, and so step by step, achieve the pre-requisites that would enable learning at higher and higher levels.

Since 2015, Narbethong State Special School has embarked on a whole school program to of cultural change to change-

- The way staff observed communication
- The way staff assessed communication
- Provided language learning opportunities within the classroom and outside the classroom
- Applied different, new strategies for communication

In 2018, SLP services have focussed on:

- Building capacity of staff
- Continued school program of teaching the movements needed for communication- especially for head movements for yes/no and initiation of communication and linking these movements to Active Learning
- Increasing number of students in the school with individual PODDs
- Building capacity of parents- parent workshops
- Working with students on student individual goals
- Increasing use of multimodal communication in the classrooms
- Developing programs for the Deafblind plus students
- Liaised with outside agencies- Queensland Government Hospital(LCCH), Mater Children's Hospital, Montrose Services, CPL, VA and DSQ. We have also tried to maintain contact with private therapists whenever possible.

SLP Services

Building Capacity of Staff

- Building capacity of staff to use multimodal communication with students in the classroom- SLPs visited classrooms regularly to work with students, teachers and teacher aides. SLPs model how to use communication systems and discuss how communication opportunities can be built in to the classroom program and how the curriculum can provide language learning opportunities
- Profession development (ISAAC, PODDs, VI)-During 2018, several staff members attended [ISAAC](#) (International Society of AAC) Conference on the Gold Coast. Notable speakers were Linda Burkhart and Janelle Sampson-Janelle delivered a paper introducing the audience to her new assessment-ROCC (Rubric of Communication Competence). On further investigation and discussion with Janelle and Kilparin State School in Adelaide where this assessment was trialled, it was felt this could be an appropriate fit for our students.



Whole school professional development will occur in January, 2019. The capacity building of staff by sending teachers to the 2 day [Introduction to PODD](#) Workshop continued in 2018. This workshop provides participants valuable information on the background to PODDs and communication for students with complex communication needs. Narbethong SSS SLP services were asked to provide 4 hours of professional development on “[Communication Considerations for Students with VI](#)” to the SLP’s in the South Metropolitan Region.

Teaching and Learning Descriptors (See Appendix for details)

All teachers reported an improvement in their understanding and use of multi-modal and AAC systems in the classroom—all teachers felt they were integrating AAC system into the daily routine better and were able to provide more teaching and learning opportunities. Some teachers felt they were also now more responsive to student’s individual initiations and were responding using the student’s individual book so personal messages could be relayed. However, all teachers reported these results were for teachers and not a reflection on aids use of the system in the classroom.

Teaching Movements for Communication

We have continued to map meaning onto movements and record how students initiate communication and respond to accept/yes and reject/no. This information is reviewed yearly and goals set around this information and linked to activities for Active Learning.

Tell It Again

The Targeted Program, *Tell it Again Q!* were introduced in Middle 2 targeting story comprehension and production skills following individual student assessments that identified that students in the classroom had difficulties with story comprehension and story retell skills. 4 lessons of the program were conducted. 2 sessions of the Tell It Again- Blue program were conducted. The Tell It Again-Blue Program is a version of Tell it Again Q! developed at Nursery Rd Special School for students in a special school. Due to time constraints at the end of the year, review assessments were not conducted.

Personal/Individualised and class PODDs for students

19 PODDs were made through the year and teacher support provided for Communication Passports for all graduating students. These PODDs were made by Sally Hanson, SLP therapy aide one day a week. By having Sally make the PODDs, it allowed the SLPs to be released to spend more time working in the classrooms. Some parent training was provided for the students who received new PODDs but not all families attended this training. However, this opportunity will be offered on an individual basis next year.

Meetings with school team

SLPs met regularly and Deputy Principal, Kerry Tait and Head of Curriculum, Angela Hallam to discuss topics relating to speech, language and communication in the school. Topics discussed included: school wide communication assessments, a school communication policy, individual curriculum plans, increasing use of multimodal communication in the classroom, students requiring individualised PODDs and the Narbethong Literacy Program and eliminating “book talk”.

As a team we have reviewed different tools that assess students with complex communication needs. In 2019 the school will be looking to implement the Rubric of Communication Competence. Janelle Sampson will be presenting a workshop to staff in January 2019.

Working with students and staff on individual communication goals

SLPs have provided intensive supports in the classrooms, working with students and teaching staff focussing on student’s individual communication goals. SLPs have worked with teachers in developing the student’s Individual Curriculum Plan. See the attached document which summaries intensive supports in the classrooms.



Parent program

A focus for the school in 2018 was to extend the communication partners for the students. There were a number of students who were graduating who had had been increasing their skills as communicators but it was becoming obvious that their parents did not feel confident in using their communication systems. To help the parents and carers of the graduating students, it was decided to run a series of Parent Programs to help participants understand the background of communication and the communication systems; teach the pathways of the PODDs through various activities and provide a series of modelling sessions. The sessions finished with parent discussions and morning tea. The parent sessions were offered twice a term. This program was also offered to all parents and carers from Narbethong State Special School. These sessions were held twice a term, for 4 terms.

Challenges

- Having PODDs accessible and available all the time – Having individual student PODDs and classroom PODDs available at the beginning of the day and travelling with the students when they leave the classroom, this is not consistently happening across the school. Despite posters and reinforcement by SLPs when in classrooms this hasn't become consistent practice across the school.
- Providing a language learning environment with opportunities for communication
- Integration of the communication system into adult/student play
- Eliminating “book talk”
- Observing student's individual initiations and responding to see if they have “something to say”
- Getting parents to use books at home
- Getting aids to observe and use the books and be involved when students are using the books.-encourage DPF goals around PODD and separate workshops for aids (playgroups in morning and afternoon)

Recommendations and Future Direction for 2019

- Implementation of a school wide communication assessment. The Rubric of Communicative Competence (ROCC) will be implemented across the school in 2019. Janelle Sampson will be doing a professional development workshop with staff in January 2019.
- School communication policy
- Working with school and teachers on embedding communication as part of the school literacy program
- Fortnightly meetings with school admin team
- Teacher aide to make PODDs- more individual PODDs will need to be made in 2019
- Continued Invest for success funding so that more SLP time is available at the school
- Working with families and extend circle of communication partners
- Develop a video library of resources to help train families/new staff/staff
- Continue teaching movements for communication e.g. Accept/yes; Reject/no; “I have something to say”.-review practice from 2018-print out individual Student Movements For Communications to be displayed in classrooms and individual students information to be maintained in communication profile
- Encourage TA DPF goals around PODD and separate workshops for aids (practical workshops before and after school).
- Working with students and teachers on students individualised communication goals
- Continue to encourage teachers to use Classroom Needs Checklist as part of referral process



- Teaching and learning Descriptors with teacher aids to measure understanding and use of communication systems when communicating with students.
- Communication passports
- Tell it Again program
- Continue SLP's role in professional development within and outside the region-PD to SLP's at Regional level on "Communication and VI"; AVT-VI State wide Conference – "Communication and VI"; TNT "Deafblind plus-the Quiet Achievers".

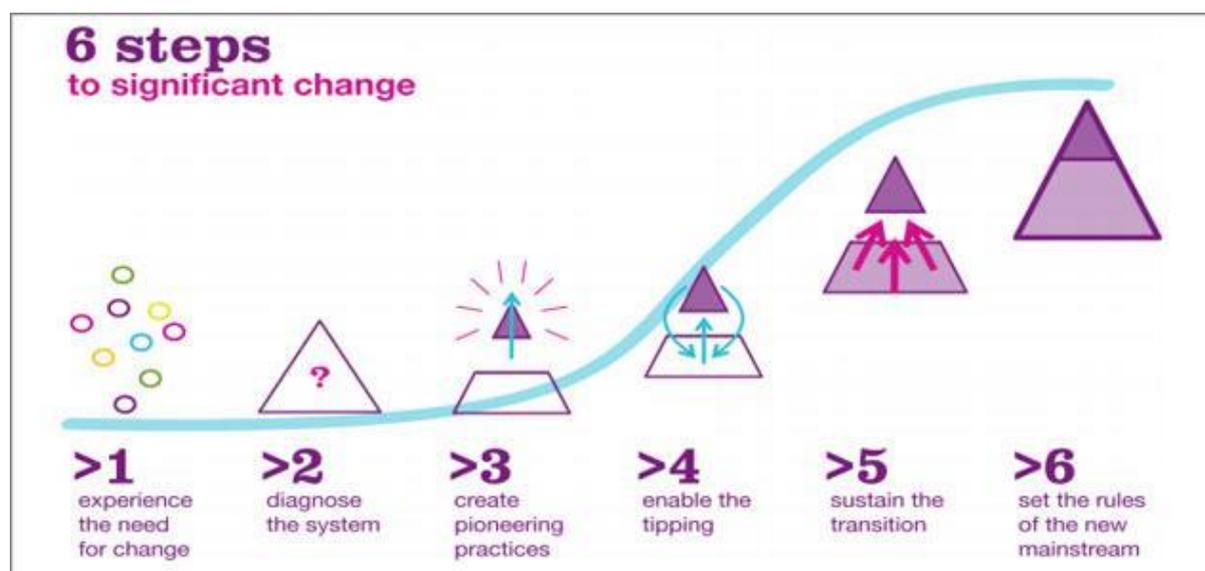
Conclusion

When Narbethong State Special School embarked on its journey to create a communication community, we realised it was more about a cultural change for staff than changing students. This change was a partnership between the administration team, staff and therapists and that changes would not happen overnight. We needed to set realistic goals and always remember the different paths different staff may walk and that everyone is at different points along the path.

Janice Light (1989,1997) discussed the notion of communication competence for people who use AAC and felt this competence was about people-that communication competence is learned by working with partners providing meaningful opportunities. However, different people value different communication skills.

To make the cultural changes necessary to try to build our communication accessible school we needed to look at our whole school not our individual students and their partners. With this in mind, the visual from "The Tipping Point-How Little Things Can Make a Big Difference" by Malcolm Gladwell guided our goal setting and helped us understand we needed to reach a time where felt the school community had reached its "tipping point".

When we examine the visual below-[Driving behaviour Change: From Pioneering Practice to Tipping Point and Beyond](#) –we can now set goals that allow our staff to continue to build on skills already learnt; accept new learning more easily as the cultural shift is in its "tipping phase". Our goals now need to be focused on maintaining knowledge and extending partners for our students.



During 2019, Narbethong State Special School SLP team with the added member of Catriona Pine will be setting goals around Steps 4;5 and 6.

Lidia Culpo (SLP DoE)



Kerrie McLean (SLP DoE)
 Appendix- Teaching and Learning Descriptors

This relates to the quantity and quality of instruction in the student’s teaching and learning environment. In particular, the teacher’s understanding and use of the AAC system and their ability to support the development of AAC skills in students with complex communication needs.

- Level 4 Class teacher has a well-developed understanding of multi-modal communication and will facilitate a learning environment where AAC is used meaningfully and continuously by everyone.
- Level 3 Class teacher has an understanding of multi-modal communication and he/she will facilitate a range of activities where AAC is used meaningfully.
- Level 2 Class teacher has some understanding of multi-modal communication and he/she will attempt to integrate the AAC system into class based activities.
- Level 1 Class teacher has some understanding of multi-modal communication and he/she has difficulty to integrate the AAC system into class based activities.
- Level 0 Class teacher demonstrates no tacit understanding of multi-modal communication and does not integrate the AAC system into class based activities.

