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"Scratching the Surface"

Beginning The Journey…
"Building A Communication Community"

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"We Are Narbethong"- a short film by Hunter Tait Narration by Kerry Tait - Acting Principal
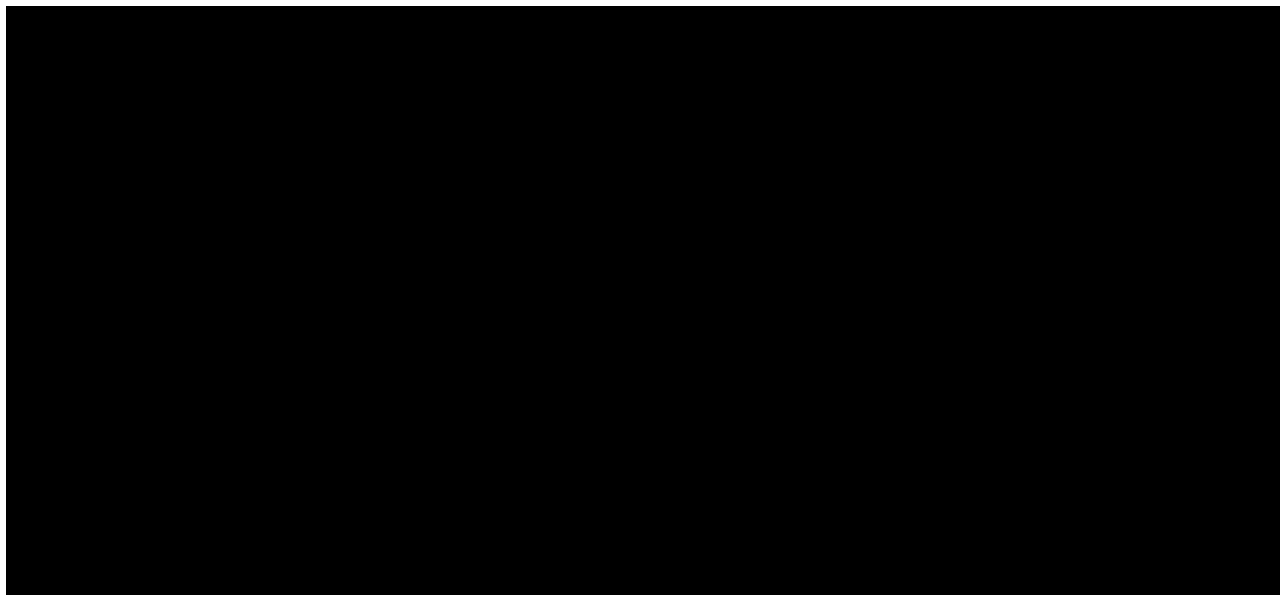
2014

Discussions with the admin team regarding the need to change culture and belief system. Staff survey at the end of 2014 identified:

• Most staff had little knowledge about formal communication systems

• Staff felt that students should only leave school being able to use a yes/no if physically possible

• Student's goals were concentrated on vocalisation-babbling; babbling chains; intonation patterns

There was a strong belief by staff that a student's communication ability and cognitive ability were related to their level attained on the Functional Scheme regardless of the physical capabilities/challenges due to their cerebral palsy.

• PD by PT(Kym Morris) and AVT-PI (Lee Withall) to help staff understand the impact a physical impairment has on learning.

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- During Term 4, 2014 many discussions were held with admin and GRG funds were applied for to begin our journey to - " Create a Communication Community"

1. More Speech Therapy Time

2. Upskill staff

3. Primary goal for Admin was and still is – "a cultural change - a change in the way we use communication in the school, our expectations of the students and our knowledge of communication and most importantly how we create a language learning environment and provide opportunities for our students."

If you focus on *results,* you will never **change.**
If you focus on *change,* you will get **results.**
~Jack Dixon

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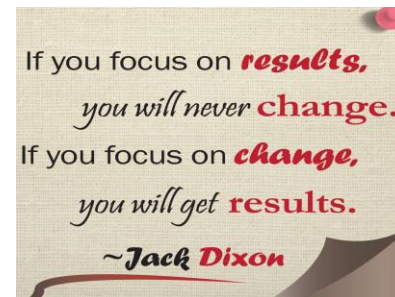
Why did it take so long to get started?

- Limited SLP time and expected service delivery model.

- Assessment tool for Active Learning, the Functional Assessment Scheme

- Developmentally based-staff had a strong belief that a student's communication and cognitive ability was related to the level attained on the Functional Scheme regardless of the physical challenges

- Specific measuring tool across many areas of child development

- Significant tool students with VI but we need to acknowledge care needs to be taken when using it with students with Cerebral Palsy or students with motor movement complexities and VI.

- Student transition from one class to another was an issue as was staff changes-new staff found getting to understand VI, PI, Active Learning was daunting enough and then the "mad" SLP wanted this crazy communication system put in place when she was hardly ever there!

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Major Building Block

- We needed staff to understand that our students are "not developmentally delayed but developmentally different." This is related to movement being different rather than being delayed - applies to students with movement disorders (CP) and VI.
- This was crucial for cultural change and underpinned a change in expectation of students.
- How was this going to happen?
- Staff already had great knowledge about their students regarding vision but we as a school needed to understand our student as learners.

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2015-Professional Development

- Gayle Porter spent 2 days providing the school with a workshop at the beginning of 2015.

- Gayle Porter is a Speech Pathologist who has over 30 years experience working with individuals who have physical, vision and multiple disabilities across the lifespan.

- Gayle is a much sought after speaker and trainer both in Australia and internationally for her expertise in augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) for individuals who have complex communication needs.

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- Gayle is the developer of the PODD - Pragmatic Organisation Dynamic Display Communication system – low tech and high tech systems.

- The 2 workshop at Narbethong SSS focused on

 " PODD for Students with Severe Vision and Movement Challenges"

- Gayle also works at CPEC - Cerebral Palsy Education Centre in Victoria so was able to show many video examples following students from early intervention to teenage and in some cases adult hood to show the growth in communication was not hindered by a lack of vision.

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What is AAC?

- AAC refers to any system, device or method that improves the ability of a person with a communication impairment to communicate effectively

- AAC is used as an alternative to, or to supplement existing communication skills

- AAC systems can include voice/sounds, facial expressions, body movements, natural gestures, signing systems, photos, symbols, text and electronic devices including computer based systems

Melissa Bates Kerrie Mclean "Comm. Tools and Strategies"-2013

Prerequisites for AAC

- In recent years there has been a strong move away from the idea of "candidacy for AAC".

- Research does not support the idea of someone being "too something" for AAC or "not ready" for AAC.

- People excluded from AAC were often also excluded from experiences, instruction & practice necessary to improve capabilities.

- Now AAC teams determine AAC interventions based on matching the individual's *needs for today* while building *future capabilities for tomorrow*

- In 1993 Pat Mirenda described breathing as the only pre-requisite relevant to communication.

- 'It has nothing to do with cognitive or chronological age, prerequisite skills, mathematical formula or any of the other models that have been developed to decide who is an AAC candidate and who is not.

Melissa Bates, Kerrie McLean "Comm. Tools and Strategies", 2013

Communication requirements

Greet

Agree/disagree

Discuss interest

Ask for things

Share information

Request

Attract attention

Complain

Protest

Lee Withall ,
"Chatting With PODD", 2012

Manipulate

Answer

Instruct others

Express an opinion

Make social contact

Joke

Express feelings

Comment

Describe

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PODD- Pragmatically Organised Dynamic Display

- Designed by Gayle Porter
- Communication Books (CD template available)
- Launched in March 2007
- PODD allows for a broad range of vocabulary for children at earlier stages of communication development
- Contains additional vocab for partners to provide receptive input
- Vocab is consistently in the same location
- Symbol-based communication book
- Organizes symbol pages into categories (e.g. mealtimes, conversation)
- Differing levels of student independence
- Allows greater capacity for sentence building

Melissa Bates Kerrie Mclean "Comm. Tools and Strategies", 2013

Communication v's VI

- Goals for communication may be different from a vision specialist.

- Primary goal is creating and expanding communication opportunities.

- Our goal is NOT increased use of vision but may help students use residual visual functional.

- However, there are times when the team may decide the expansion of the language is more important than the use of vision and this determines the type of system to be used.

Linda Burkhart & John Costello (2008)

http:/www.lburkhart.com/lidaJohnCVIhandout.pdf

Typical inappropriate communication goals we see for students diagnosed with the characteristics –

- of CVI
- complex motor and
- cognitive difficulty include

Gayle Porter-PODD for Students with Severe Vision and Movement Challenges,Jan.2015

Linda Burkhart & John Costello (2008)

http:/www.lburkhart.com/lindaJohnCVIhandout.pdf

- Student will identify requested object/photo/symbol from a field of 2

- Student will communicate a choice from a field of two objects/photos/symbols

- Student will match picture symbol to object.

- Gayle Porter-PODD for Students with Severe Vision and Movement Challenges,Jan.2015

Linda Burkhart & John Costello (2008)

http:/www.lburkhart.com/lindaJohnCVIhandout.pdf

Typical progress report -

- Student inconsistently looks at options

- Students eye gaze is too quick/fleeting to interpret

- Student is too distractible to attend to task

- Student demonstrates maladaptive behaviour when presented with communication choices

- Student does not consistently identify symbols suggesting poor comprehension

Gayle Porter-PODD for Students with Severe Vision and Movement Challenges,Jan.2015

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These Goals Require Student To-

- Visually attend/regard the field

- Visually track

- Visually hold gaze

- Visually confirm with joint attention to a partner

When There Is No Success-

- Based only on visual skills the student is assessed as "not ready just yet" for communication.

- "We need to wait until student has developed the prerequisite skills."

- Students who have complex visual skills and complex motor movement disabilities will always have complex communication needs BUT does that mean we never offer opportunities for communication?

How Do We Provide Systems To Students With VI?

- We need to create communication opportunities and strategies that allow the student to use auditory strengths.

- This ensures the student's language development is not held back by delayed visual skills and lack of movement opportunities because of motor disorders.

Basic Understanding

- The brain builds understanding based on patterns
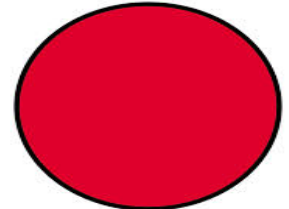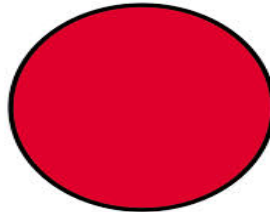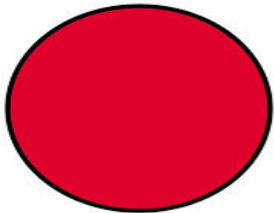
- We need to be presenting vocabulary that doesn't disappear.

- We need to present vocabulary that can be built upon instead of being inconsistent or consistently being replaced.

- A strategy of "20" questions where the student only has access to yes/no responses is inefficient, tiring, confusing and the student has no way of anticipating what will come next.

- "Yes/No" responses cannot be considered a communication system but do form vital role in allowing a student to participate in communication.

So How Do We Move Forward For Students With VI?

- We need to present the vocabulary in a systematic way so "20 Questions" will provide the student with a pathway to recognise how a pattern in the vocabulary is presented.

Strategy - Partner Assisted Scanning

- Auditory scanning - totally blind students
- Auditory-Visual Scanning - for students with some residual vision
- Removes the need to visually shift gaze and to only be limited by vision for communication
- Eliminates the need for communication success to be based on symbol recognition

Role of SLPs

- Create language learning environments by-
    - Ensuring communication systems are available at all times
    - Making the systems
    - Using communication systems to interact for genuine purposes throughout the day
    - Training partners to use the system
    - Train and model to staff how to recognise and respond to communication attempts
    - Reinforce the concept of always expecting communication
    - See the student, see the system
    - Reinforce that our initial input was for building receptive language skills

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A key strategy is modelling.

The student needs to see other people using their system.

Everyone learns how to *"model"* – how to interact and chat using aided symbols, sign (and speech).

Lee Withall, "Chatting With PODDS",2012

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Focus on interaction

Aided language acquisition

- The language learning environment

Input ➡️

Aided Language
(Spoken Language)
(Sign language)

Aided Language
(Spoken Language)
(Sign language)

Output ➡️

Gayle Porter, 2009

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Made resources

- Developed classroom books for all classes for teachers to learn to scan with and for students to use.
- Books available in the classroom
- Books travel with students
- High contrast
- 2 books: 9 cell high contrast and one symbol per page.
- Began with the belief - "No pre-requisite for AAC" and with Pat Mirenda's words ringing in our ears - "The only pre requisite for AAC is breathing".

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Training Communication Partners

- Parent Information morning and hands on modelling session

- Full day PD for AVT-VI's who were working with SLP's in schools within the state.

<p style="text-align:center;color:blue;">I C.A.N. communicate
at Narbethong</p>

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Modelling

- Staff were encouraged to video themselves using PODDs in interactions with students

- Staff responded well to this and found the videos a valuable learning tool.

- As some students began to use the books, it created a sense of excitement and positivity within the school.

- The students who began using the books were younger students as well as upper school students.

- It was the change in these students that had a significant impact on the cultural change.

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Total School Accept/Yes and Reject/No Program

- In conjunction with the music teacher, Lee Strickland, we created songs for yes/no so as a school, teaching these head movements for yes/no became a priority.

- All staff talked, slept, dreamt about yes/no - and we could hear our words being echoed all over the school: " I'm watching your head to tell me yes or no - chin on chest for yes, side to side for no".

- It was amazing how many students with complex physical needs and VI learnt these simple movements - we taught them and practiced them in songs and games and expected them when they responded.

- As adults transitioning out of school, we felt having an easily recognizable yes/no was a priority as well as for all the different staff that come into the students lives.

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Regular Follow Up

After each visit to the school, regular emails to-

• Reinforce the total school goals

•Thank all staff for the great work and commitment

•Relate the positive things seen in the school and the good news stories.

•Suggest new activities that classes could use when focussing on the skills we were trying to develop.

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Gayle Porter

August visit - 3 days spent visiting all classes, giving feedback to teachers and support staff.

Recommendations from the visit:

• Documenting student initiations and how students communicate yes/no

• More individual communication books

• Teach movements for communication

• More direct and indirect modelling

• Not only had staff surprised Gayle in how far they had come and how well they were scanning but the many of the students had also learnt to scan.

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Outcomes from staff survey in Term 3 2015

- Increase in staff knowledge of PODDs from beginning to the end of the year.

- Increase in staff confidence

- Daily use of books rated as "Often"

- Number of books were sufficient in their classrooms and the type of book was appropriate.

- PODDS were travelling outside the classroom

- Teachers knew the difference between a direct and full model

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Outcomes from staff survey in 2015

- Other staff such as PTs, OTs, Admin were not confident in using the books

- Overall staff did not know how students were initiating communication

- Suggestions from feedback included
  - More time with SLPs
  - More time to practice modelling
  - How to develop language learning environments
  - Continue to video sessions for peer learning
  - How to reinforce at home

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Term 4, 2015

- We worked with teachers focussing on documenting student initiations and how students accept and reject
- Information was put into a template and displayed in the classroom

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Dylan

When you see me (see below) it means "I have something to say". Please get my/class communication book and follow the directions.
- Vocalise
- Teach hand up or tap???

How I say Accept and Reject (Yes/No)
- "yes"- head nod or look toward partner
- "no"- head shake
- Not consistent - partner may need to prompt Dylan "I'm watching your head to tell me yes or no"

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Assessment and Data Collection

- As with any project of this nature, **assessment** needed to be done but deciding what tool to use was difficult.

- Our students have significant VI-most are blind; complex physical and movement challenges as well as cognitive and learning challenges. Many have significant medical challenges and health issues that make accessing the learning potential they have difficult to maximise - for some students we have small windows of opportunities.

- We needed an assessment that recognised all of these elements and that did not require or assess a student based on a motor response.

- We cannot assume that a motor response or rather a lack of motor response is the same as a cognitive response.

- From research across other special schools, the Communication Matrix appeared to be a logical choice as it is widely used for similar students.

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However?????

- The manual states- "may not be suitable for students with vision impairment" and this assessment uses " a staged approach based on typical early communication, gestural and spoken communication." (Gayle Porter –response to ACARA,1st draft)

- The question remained, Would our students be seriously disadvantaged by assessing them on a language assessment that uses test items involving vision or movements they could not do?

- Students with motor challenges and complex communication needs often need acknowledgement that their movements and communication follows an atypical pathway.

- These students may acquire symbolic language communication using AAC systems before demonstrating intentional language through gesture.

- It was decided Communication Matrix was not appropriate.

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So What To Use?
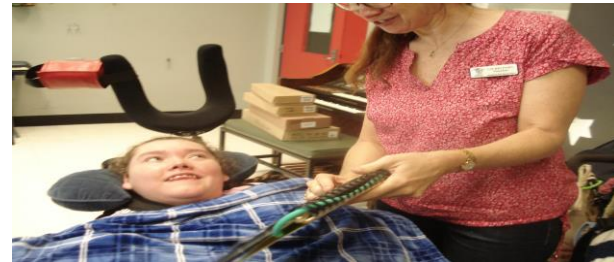
Class teachers completed the Pragmatics Profile of Everyday Communication Skills for Emergent Communicators by Dewart and Summers (1995)

November 2014

November 2015

November 2016

• No age scores and looks at functional language and pragmatic use of language.

• Divided into Receptive and Expressive Language

• Student's responses recorded and not compared to developmental scales.

• The responses for each student are scored and placed on an excel spreadsheet so that we have a record for long term progress and data for planning future targeted goals.

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Examples of Pragmatic Profile
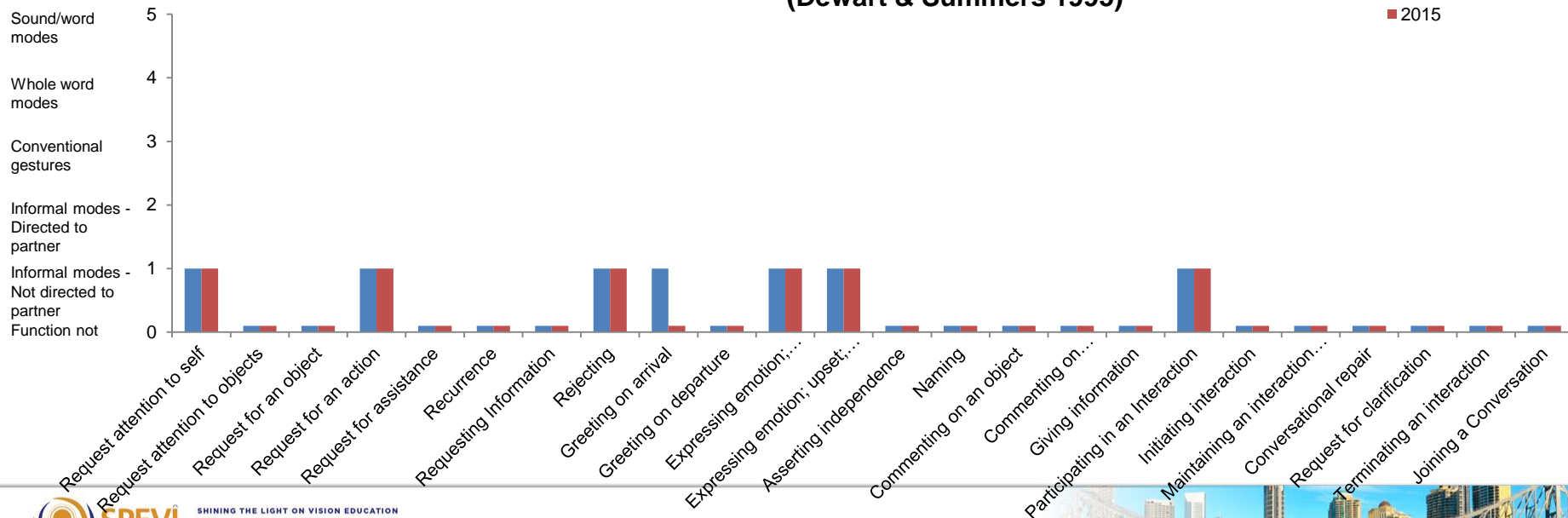
Jarrod BG - 2014/15
Pragmatic Profile of Early Communication Skills in Children - Revised Edition
(Dewart & Summers 1995)
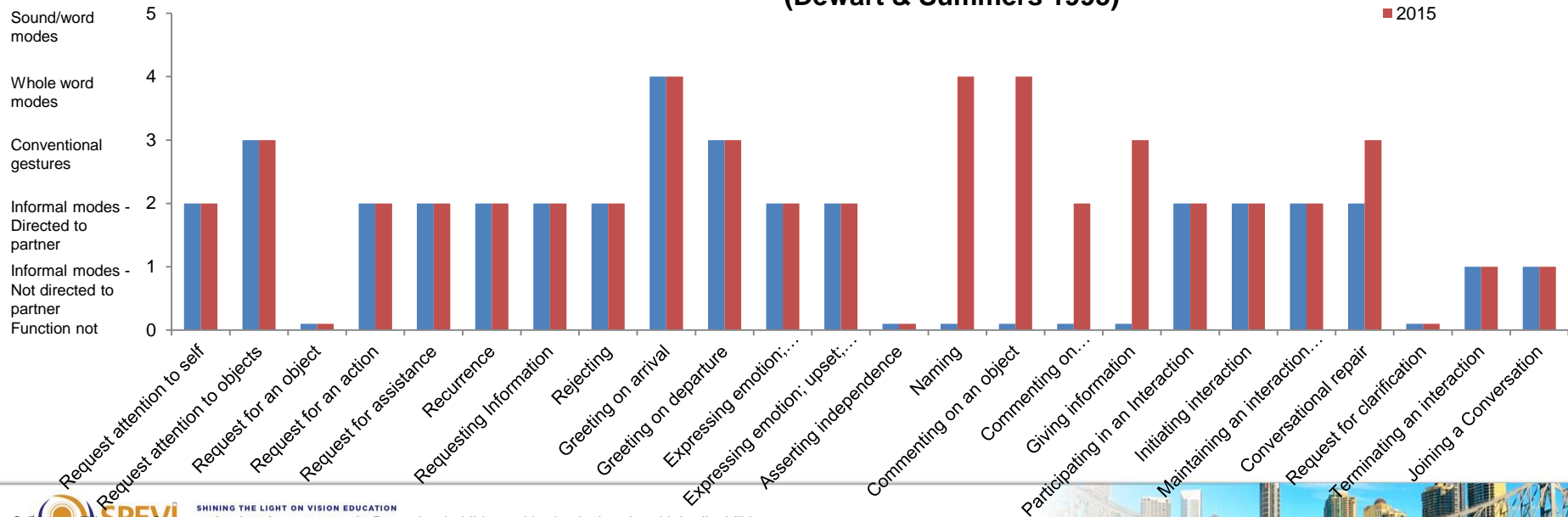
■ 2014
■ 2015

Examples of Pragmatic Profile

Seb E - 2014/15
Pragmatic Profile of Early Communication Skills in Children - Revised Edition
(Dewart & Summers 1995)

Research indicates

A communication book alone is not a guarantee for success - even if a student has a communication system and uses AAC they can still be;

- A passive communicator
- Initiate few communications
- Respond infrequently
- Produce limited messages
- Have restricted vocabulary

Metropolitan Region Information Sheet for data Outcomes for AAC Survey for 2015 Stats for SLP's.

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Success of a System

• Study by Johnson (2006) which has been supported by other studies indicated that the success or abandonment of an AAC system depended on a complex network of factors.

• The factors that promoted long term success included-

1. Support and use of the AAC system
2. Attitude of the family, student, school and communicatio
3. System characteristics and fit.

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What has happened in 2016?

Gayle's visit

• Visited most class rooms- observed teachers using books and running groups-interacting with students.

• All teachers could discuss each students method of initiation as well how they responded for "accept/yes and reject/no"

• Gave new book templates and future
 directions for class books

• Spent the morning talking to parents.

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At a Class Level

- Each class now has new expanded class books - vocab specific for individual classes.

- General books in most areas of the school-taxi area; reception; vocab specific book for "Susan's Garden"; OT/PT's/School Nurse; Low Vision Clinic; Low Vision Library; music teacher –we are waiting for delivery of monsoon paper to make a book for the pool, but not in the playground. (This is the one place we feel teachers/students need to take own books/voice).

- Making more individual books-made own templates from paper books Gayle left us-books for across all age ranges

- Continued to have Parent Information days with practice modelling sessions

- Regular Newsletter Articles   I C.A.N.

                    I Communicate at Narbethong

- Continued to model in classrooms, video

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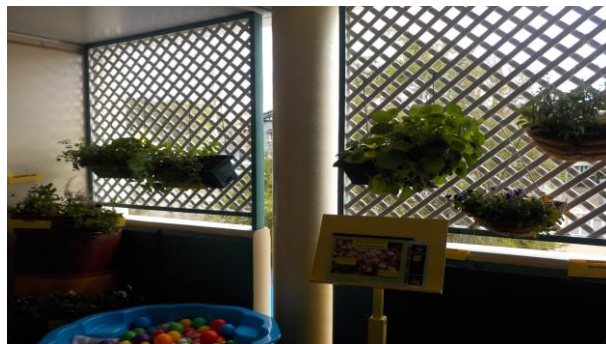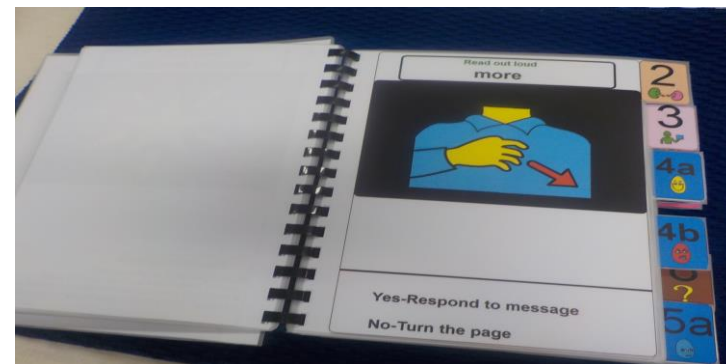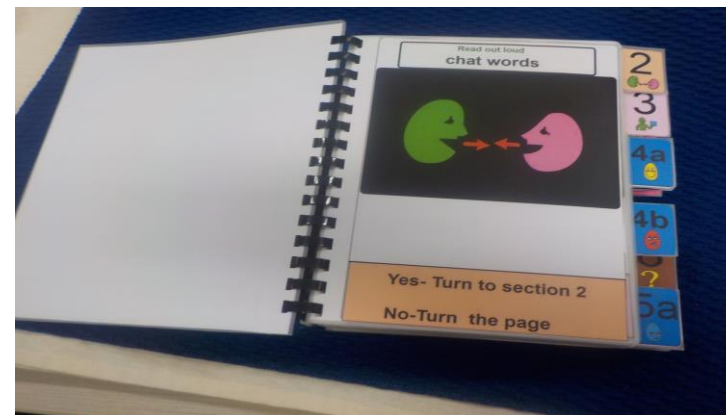
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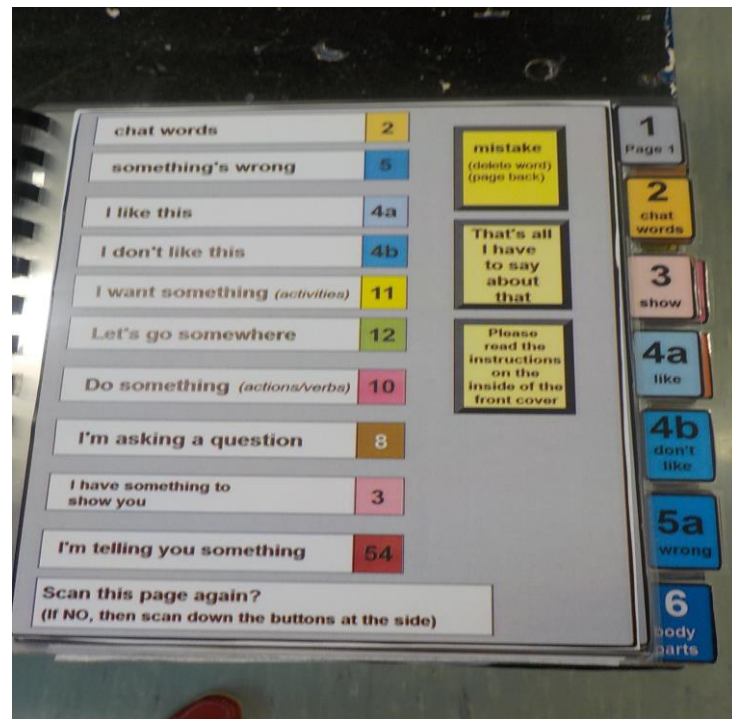2017 CONFERENCE
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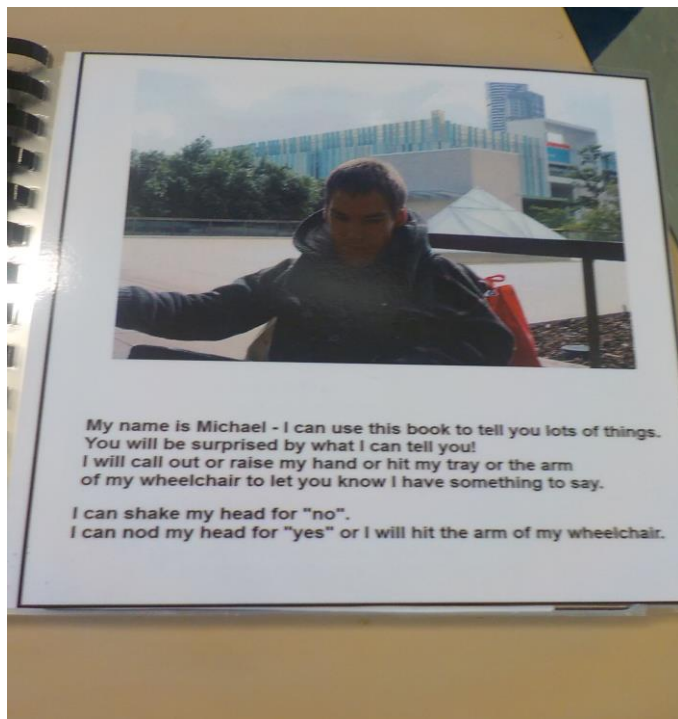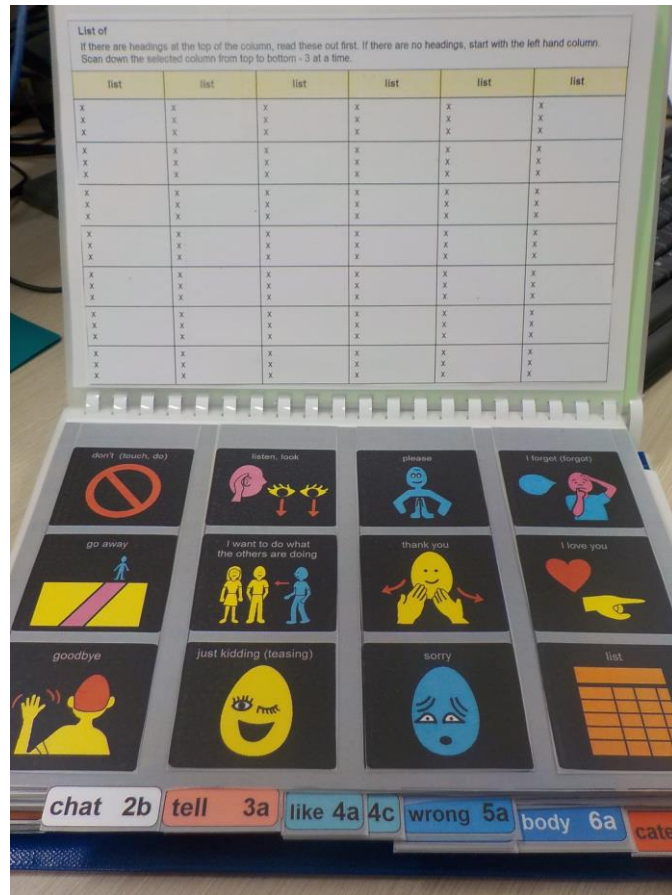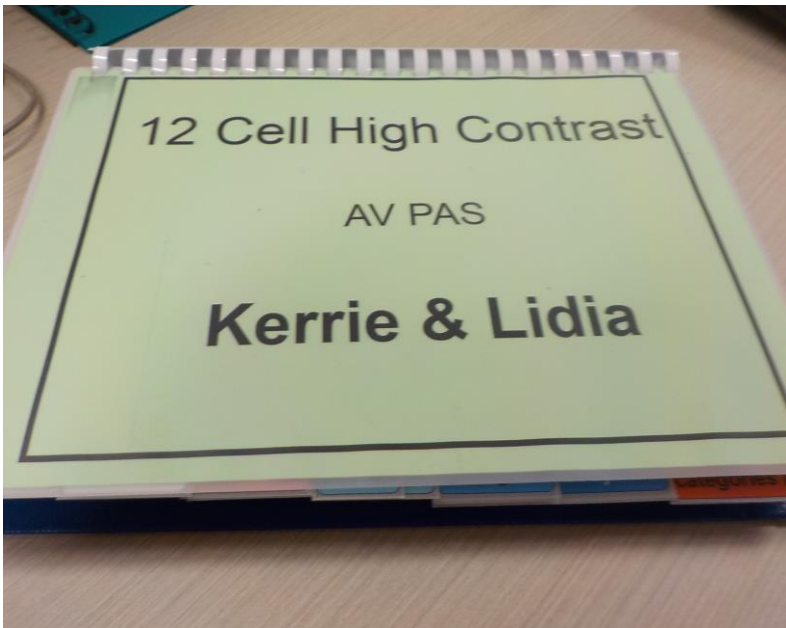South Pacific Educators in Vision Impairment
SHINING THE LIGHT ON VISION EDUCATION
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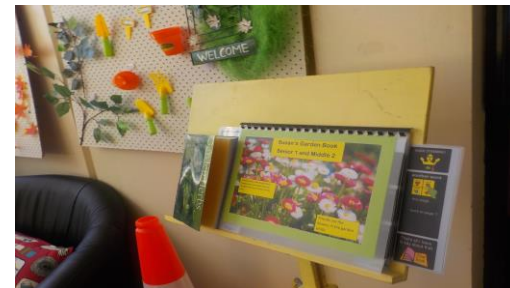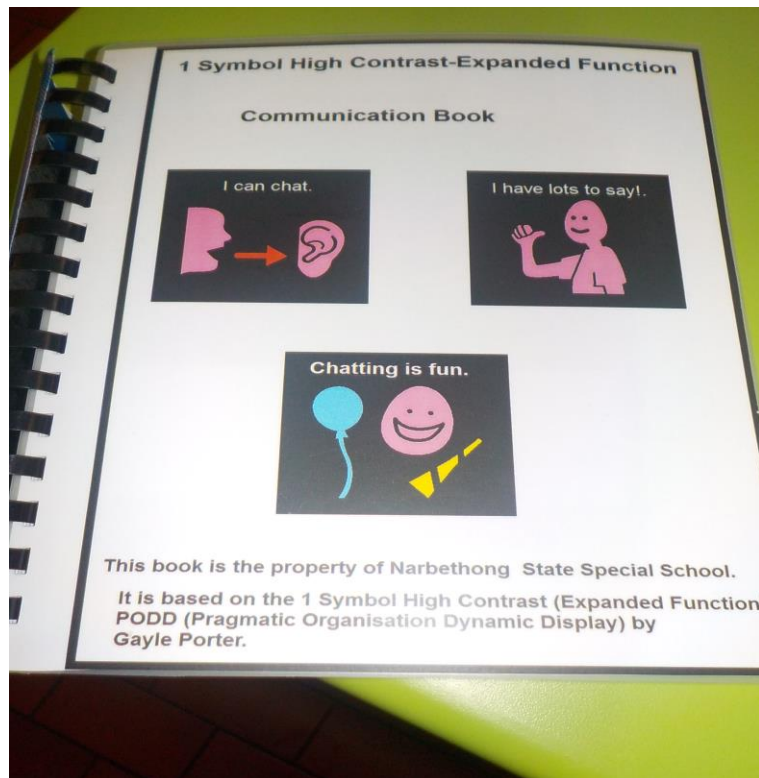
What next?

- Time to do next Pragmatic profiles and analyse the data
- Continue to upgrade class books and make more individual books
- Continue to model and upgrade staff skills and include families more.
- Find new ways to collect data especially whole school data.- adapting the tool used for AAC stats in Metropolitan region or FCCS (Functional Communication Classification System-CPL Qld).
- Series of videos to demonstrate the variety of modelling strategies
- Communication policy
- Organise a visit by Gayle Porter in 2017

Kerrie Mclean SLP DET and Lidia Culpo SLP DET,TNT,2016 "Communication Community"

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How do we measure the school's success?

There is now a communication system in operation in the school. Communication/ICP goals incorporate use of pragmatic functions and have use of PODD as receptive and/or expressive language strategy.

Through our observations working in classrooms:

• Teachers using PODDs in the classroom for modelling to build receptive language

• Teachers responding to student initiations

• Teachers able to give information on how students initiate and how students communicate accept/reject

• Teachers asking SLPs for specific support to incorporate PODDs in class activities to establish language learning environments-celebrating more self initiated communicated messages.

• More group sessions

• No more "chat" about babbling!

• Kerrie Mclean SLP DET and Lidia Culpo SLP DET,TNT,2016 "Communication Community

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Are We There Yet?

- In a word-NO
- Are we nearly there? NO
- Are we further along than we were 2 years ago? YES!
- BUT - we have not reached a point of sustainability, the "tipping point"

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So our Journey Continues With Our End Goal For Our Students In Mind

"Being able to say-

What I want say to,

To whoever **I want to say it to,**

Whenever **I want to say it,**

However **I choose to say it."**

Gayle Porter, Melbourne, Aust.

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"Learn By Doing"-Narbethong State Special School

Narbethong Special School

- Gayle Porter 2 day workshop-coming to work in the rooms in Aug.

- Books in every room

- Nov. 2014 - every student assessed on Pragmatic profile-Dewart and Summers, retested in 2015, 2016 onwards

- Each student has own excel spreadsheet for progressive data collection and to record progression over time

- Some schools will use Communication Matrix-not recommended for students with PI and VI –also has age scores and pre-intentional levels.

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