Support communication

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION
TE TĀHUHU O TE MĀTAURANGA

A suggestion for implementing the strategy
'Key areas of support' from the Guide: Autism
and learning

Includes:

Support understanding

Ask students what works for them

Support expressive and oral language

Honour student contributions

Understand AAC systems

Useful resources

Inclusive Education
From
Guide: Autism and learning
Strategy: Key areas of support
Suggestion: Support communication

Date
21 May 2024
Link
inclusive.tki.org.nz/guides/autism-and-learning/support-communication

Support understanding

Takiwātanga - autism can mean that students find understanding other people challenging.

Understanding others

- Use fewer words
- Slow down the rate of speaking
- Give students more time to process information
- Use clear, concise information with supporting visuals whenever possible.

Understanding abstract language such as sarcasm, metaphors, exaggeration, absolutes or humour

- Teach and support understanding of abstract concepts
- Avoid absolutes as students may take these literally
- Use terms such as "usually" to avoid absolutes, for example, "We usually play at about 11am".

Understanding gestures, facial expressions, or body language and applying to social situations

- Teach students to recognise, interpret and respond appropriately to gestures, facial expressions, or body language.
- Teach, model and practise conversation, social and interpersonal skills such as turn taking and questioning.

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Ask students what works for them

Ask students what communication approaches they prefer.

Video hosted on Youtube http://youtu.be/4yAAOI6JUsM

No captions or transcript

Source:
Organization for Autism Research (US)
http://youtu.be/4yAAOI6JUsM?t=6m15s

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Support expressive and oral language

Communication skills are a priority learning need for some autistic students.

Oral language encompasses any method of communication the child uses as a first language, for example New Zealand Sign Language (NZSL) and Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) systems that replace or augment speech.

- Provide ample opportunities for students to make their feelings, thoughts and needs known.
- Give students a heads up, when possible, so they can prepare their response.
- Give students time to respond.
- Explicitly teach non-verbal communication strategies, such as eye contact, facial expressions and body language.
- Explicitly teach skills associated with social interactions, such as joining a group, taking part in two way conversations, and reading non-verbal cues.
- Talk directly to the student, not to their support person.

For students who use a specialised communication tool or system:

- they should always have access to it
- model communication using their tool or system.

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Honour student contributions

Listen to students and honour their contributions.

Video hosted on Youtube http://youtu.be/H7dca7U7GI8
Closed Captions

Source:
Communication First
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H7dca7U7GI8

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Understand AAC systems

Understand and support ākonga that use augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) systems to meet their communication needs.

Understand the role of AAC systems

- Students may communicate non-verbally using an AAC system. AAC is a term to describe methods that can help people to communicate non-verbally.
- Non-verbal communication systems use a variety of techniques including sign language, gestures, visuals, written communication, or specialised communication boards and communication technologies.
- Students who use specialised communication boards and technologies communicate by selecting from an increasingly complex range of communication symbols or choices.
- Some digital systems speak words aloud for the student.

Support AAC users under the guidance of the student's Speech Language Therapist.

- Make sure that the AAC device is consistently available, within and across settings.
- Model communication using their tool or system.
- Respond to AAC communication promptly, appropriately, and consistently.
- Prompt ākonga to use their AAC system when making requests and expressing themselves.
- Help them to give language to what they are feeling, especially after experiencing challenges.
- Set up opportunities to teach use of the AAC device by scheduling daily practice sessions and embedding opportunities throughout the day.
- Teach peers how to use the AAC device. If possible, give peers their own AAC devices.

See the **Speech, language and communication needs** Inclusive Education Guide for more information.

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Useful resources

Supporting students with speech, language and communication needs

Outlines speech-language therapy support for children with speech, language and communication needs.

Visit website

What are AAC devices and how can they help my child?

Describes key communication device types.

Publisher: Westside Children's Therapy

Visit website

How students with limited verbal capabilities can thrive in inclusive classrooms

Summary of key ideas and links to video examples.

Publisher: Edutopia

Visit website

Aided language stimulation explained

Video showing the importance of modelling language using modes the student uses.

Publisher: Loudon County Public Schools Assistive Technology

Visit website