

# 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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