



Linden Lodge School's Learning Environments Framework

A system for developing communication

By The Communication Group: Diego Gazquez Navarro, Callum Slade and John Judge

Communication environment 1: Cyan; Preformal Pathway. Unintentional or reflexive actions

The child is ready to work at this level if they are:

Learners show only involuntary/reflexive responses to internal or external stimuli usually associated with well-being, e.g. pain, hunger, discomfort. This is often inconsistent and does not follow a pattern. Learners at this level are still building relationships with others and time and effort must be put into this.

Communication Environment

Where learners have the best potential for predicting what will happen throughout their day. This can be by establishing consistent routines with activities that start and finish with the same structure each time, giving appropriate warning for an upcoming event or action, Place or object cues (concrete and personalised) can be used by adults to routinely represent routine activities for the child (although *this does not mean that the child necessarily understands the cues yet*).

This environment will support everything the child may be learning holistically and cannot always be broken down into subject areas or activities.

Consistency is key.

The fundamental principles of intensive interaction should be used consistently with the child.

Tactile contact should be stressed. Rocking, spinning,

Tactile environments: Resonance board, textures, space blankets.

Switches and other high technology are not appropriate as this level.

Practitioners should:

React to vocalisations, cries, body movements, etc. by student and explore potential meaning (e.g. guess pain, hunger, hot, tired) and respond accordingly.

- Reflexive level – the communication partner assigns social significance to a small range of very early behaviours, sounds and reflexes which occur in response to a limited range of internal and external stimuli through all available sensory channels.
- At this level the learner is still learning to consistently respond to a communication partner. Interactions will be focused on the relationship between the learner and communication partner.

Introduce an activity or an object as an event in its own right.

Use real objects that are relevant to the events or activities

Look for any changes in behaviour which are not reflex responses, for example:

- stilling (a momentary pause)
- turning (head, eyes, or body)
- lip/tongue movement
- an eye flicker
- a change in breathing
- tensing or relaxing (you may need to be in close physical contact in order to perceive this).
- a change in activity level
- vocalising
- open mouth/tongue movement
- moving fingers, e.g. in sheepskin
- a kick
- a decline of interest when the stimulus is repeated
- recovery of interest when a new stimulus is offered.

Take care when presenting an ‘unexpected’ stimulus not to cause a startle reaction – good practice would usually be to warn the learner of forthcoming events by touch or voice.

Language function and vocabulary

- May be interpreted as expressing comfort or discomfort or showing interest in people
- **Reflexive responses would be the communication methods used here by the child. Reflexes responses are not under the control of the child.**

Steps towards Pink communication environment:

Reactive level – the communication partner assigns social significance to reactive behaviours which are produced in response to a wide range of stimuli through all available sensory channels.

React to close contact with familiar adult.

RfL 2, 5 and 7

Communication environment 2: Pink; Preformal Pathway Intentional actions, not intentional communicative



Learning Readiness

The child is ready to work at this level if they are:

With support They are ready TO investigate their immediate world. They are starting to develop consistent preferences to what they like or dislike and they produce some actions to show that they like or dislike those.. Although these behaviours are voluntary, they are not intentionally communicative, as learners do not yet realise they can control the behaviour of others. Parents/carers interpret these behaviours as communicating something. We are looking for consistency in actions while giving them meaning.

Begun to understand steps of routines. Eye contact/ routines of attention and joint actions begin to emerge (when seeing a spoon during feeding and they open mouth)

Supported one to one turn take, for example, vocalising and adult responds to the sounds.

AAC Environment

- Lots of things happen by accident that they stimulate a reactions, like tickles, a bottle that falls and makes a sound.

Consistency of routines.

Cause and effect switches (immediate effect) linked to toys can begin to be used, eg, vibrating toys, musical toys.

Students interact with adults or explore the environments but not both things at the same time.

Practitioner Skills

Practitioners should:

- As for level 1 but extending the interaction.

Start recording reactions so that they can be shared and to look for consistencies.

Language function and vocabulary

May be interpreted as protesting, wanting to continue an action, to obtain more or to attract attention

Steps towards Indigo communication environment:

- Proactive behaviour – the communication partner recognises behaviours as signals and assigns communicative intent and meaning, becoming increasingly selective about behaviours to which they respond, shaping intentional communication.

Contingency awareness (cause and effect)

Object permanence

Communication environment 3: Indigo; Semi-Formal Pathway. Non-conventional gesture used to communicate



<p>Learning Readiness The child is ready to work at this level if they are: Here, learners communicate intentionally but in unconventional ways, e.g. body movement. They realise that other people can be used to obtain something they want.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ engaging purposefully with people and the environment. ■ using consistent individual behaviours in communication such as likes and dislikes. ■ understanding the significance of personal objects and sensory cues that refer to particular events e.g gets excited when sees push chair. ■ have some turn taking skills when interacting with a familiar person ■ understanding that switches can control the immediate environment e.g. knows that a switch will do something. 	<p>AAC Environment Begin to develop visual language in the class environment by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ having lots of single photographs and representational objects available for communication throughout the environment. e.g. Messy play: photos of activities attached to representational object such as water (jug), sand (spade), paint. (brush). ■ simple VOCAs recorded with a greeting, favourite song or to request “more” for all to use available in activity areas. ■ switch operated toys and latch box electrical equipment.
<p>Practitioner Skills Practitioners should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Create an environment where all forms of communication are valued. ■ Use objects in context for a child to understand routines and changes e.g. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Show a child their own cup as you say “time for a drink” and then take them to the table. – Show a child an object and a photograph before taking to a new activity, such as a photo of the garden ■ Use key words and signs. ■ Seek advice for positioning and access to switches. 	<p>Language function and vocabulary May communicate refusal/rejection, a request for more of an action/object, a request for a new action/object, a request for attention or showing affection</p> <p>Make choices Requesting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Favourite routines and activities ■ More <p>Rejecting Responding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Stop / no <p>Drawing attention Initiating conversation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Hello ■ Names of key adults
<p>Steps towards Orange communication environment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ To develop situational understanding. ■ To communicate intentionally through facial expression, body movement, vocalisation. ■ To use some conventional systems of communication such as pointing/ eye pointing or head nodding. ■ To use gesture, photo, or a simple VOCA to attract attention ■ To develop an awareness of control technology through switch control of toys and other equipment 	

Communication environment 4: Orange; Pre and Semi-Formal Pathway. Conventional pre-symbolic communication



Learning Readiness

The child is ready to work at this level if they are:

Learners use pre-symbolic behaviours to communicate intentionally, e.g. gesture, vocalization. The learner 'acts on' both people and objects at the same time, e.g. gazing at someone and pointing to an object of interest to share their experience (proto-declarative). Learners without sight may not develop this shared attention.

- have situational understanding e.g. understand some words in context
- can communicate intentionally through facial expression, body movement, vocalisation.
- use some conventional systems of communication such as pointing or head nodding.
- may be able to use gesture, photo, or a simple VOCA to attract attention
- have an awareness of control technology through switch control of toys and other equipment

Communication environment

- single photograph or pictures of all activities and choices available in each area for all children and staff to use.
- simple core vocabulary boards easily available in the nursery to support communication.
- VOCA available with some core vocabulary and some words specific to the area. E.g. more, stop, me, look, like and clothes words in the dressing up area.

Practitioner Skills

Practitioners should:

- Create an environment where all forms of communication are valued
- Provide activities which engage children at this level and allow others to join in. e.g. Cause and effect activities, use of simple tools in messy play, simple one step role play (spoons and saucepans) etc.
- Use photos to offer children simple choices of two to three things to enable clear requesting. For example show a child a photo of play dough and bikes to enable them to choose. If a child moves to the computer to request, show them the photo of the computer as you say "You want the computer".

Language function and vocabulary

Encourage the child to use gesture, pointing or eye pointing to express:

Existence e.g. look **Disappearance** e.g. gone **Recurrence** e.g. more
Possession e.g. mine **Rejection** e.g. no **Non-existence** e.g. gone
Location e.g. there **Action** e.g. go **Agent** e.g. you **Object** e.g. cup
Attributes e.g. yucky

Use this vocabulary with:

- Names of key people (children and adults) ■ Favourite activities ■ More
- Go ■ Stop ■ Help ■ Like ■ Don't like

Steps towards Yellow communication environment:

- To develop an understanding of an increasingly larger vocabulary relating to everyday situations.
- To use a core vocabulary through signs, symbols, or a VOCA.
- To develop control of technology through scanning, joystick, trackerball, mouse

Communication environment 5: Yellow; Semi-Formal Pathway. Concrete symbolic communication



<p>Learning Readiness</p> <p>The child is ready to work at this level if they are:</p> <p>At this level, learners begin to use concrete symbols to represent objects/people. Such symbols may be objects of reference, pictures or actions/gestures. There must be a clear 1:1 relationship to the original object, i.e. symbol must resemble the original in terms of appearance, feel, sound or action made.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ have an understanding of an increasingly larger vocabulary relating to everyday situations. ■ use a core vocabulary through signs, symbols, or a VOCA. ■ are developing control of technology through scanning, joystick, trackball or mouse 	<p>Communication Environment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ using topic based communication boards with core and related vocabulary E.g. boards in messy play area, small world area, book corner, snack area, exploratory play area and at the computer station etc ■ using a range of VOCAS in key areas for participation Eg VOCA in the book corner with repeated lines from favourite stories. ■ having a range of early computer programs that require simple scan and select. model and enable exploration of scan select with programs such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Jigsaw – Paint package
<p>Practitioner Skills</p> <p>Practitioners should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Use some symbols alongside the photos on communication boards related to an activity. ■ Begin to model linking ideas as you comment on children’s actions e.g. “Yellow boots”. ■ Begin to develop your own communication boards for routine activities. These can be kept in a file for ease of use. ■ As children move to using personal communication books it is helpful to create one for yourself to use in chats with them. ■ Continue to demonstrate use of generic communication aids in activities. ■ Use two and three signs during interaction with the child. having available VOCA (Two –Three messages) 	<p>Language function and vocabulary</p> <p>Encourage child to use point/eye point, sign, symbol, VOCA, vocalisation to express the following language functions</p> <p>DIRECTING: (suggested vocabulary) <i>me, you, your, come, go, turn, look, stop, etc.</i></p> <p>REQUESTING: (suggested vocabulary) <i>want, more, help, can I? (may requesting objects not present)</i></p> <p>GIVING INFORMATION: (suggested vocabulary) friends and family, food, clothes, colours, routine school and home activities</p> <p>DESCRIBING: (suggested vocabulary) <i>In, out, big, little, 1, 2, lots, many, Colours</i></p> <p>QUESTIONING: (suggested vocabulary) <i>who, what, where</i></p> <p>REPAIRING MISUNDERSTANDINGS: (suggested vocabulary) <i>no, not</i></p>
<p>Steps towards Green communication environment:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Through sign, symbol or VOCA communication: – Use topic vocabulary related to interests and routine activities – Link ideas using core and topic vocabulary in an increasing range of activities 2. Begin to access technology either directly or through pointer control or by using scan and select. Choose the most suitable method, i.e., – Mouse – Tracker Ball – Joy stick – Single switch step scan , two switch step scan 	

Communication environment 6: Green; Semi-Formal Pathway. Abstract symbolic communication

<p>Learning Readiness The child is ready to work at this level if they are: Abstract symbols (e.g. speech, manual signs, Brailled or printed words, abstract graphic symbols or 3D abstract symbols) are used one at a time. They may also include proto words – the learners’ own consistent pattern of sounds to stand for an object, person or event (e.g. ‘nonny’ for milk)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ can communicate through sign , symbol or VOCA using topic vocabulary related to interests and routine activities ■ link ideas using core and topic vocabulary in an increasing range of activities 	<p>AAC Environment Continue to develop visual language in the class environment by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Ensuring the communication book and/or VOCA is available in all areas ■ Extending the number of related activity boards and/or pages as new activities are introduced, for example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – a board to retell a favoured story – a board to plan a new cooking session ■ Having a range of ICT programs available accessed either directly or scanning and selecting. ■ Modelling and enabling exploration of the child’s own access. Suggested programmes are <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Clicker – simple talking books – Switch it Maker – My World 1& 2 – Paint packages
<p>Practitioner Skills Practitioners should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Use the communication book and /or VOCA in interactions. ■ Develop your own communication boards for use in small group activities Eg During a cookery session point to your own board as you sum up the activity. ■ Give time to explore. ■ Give time for learner to explore new vocabulary and respond to what they say. ■ Begin to use open questions Eg “Why” ■ Model use of new descriptive vocabulary in a range of activities ■ Familiarise and practice using extended core vocabulary ■ Develop fluency in signing core words with activity vocabulary (formal sign training is necessary at this stage) 	<p>Language function and vocabulary Encourage child to use point/eye point, sign, symbol, VOCA, vocalisation to express the following language functions.</p> <p>GIVE AND SHARE INFORMATION (<i>Suggested vocabulary</i>): More routine activities at home and school, More colour and shape, Body Parts, Time, days of week, Number page 1-20, Alphabet page, Descriptive, Positional</p> <p>DESCRIBE <i>Suggested vocabulary: In, out, up, down, on, under, long, short, big, little, good, bad, better, best, pretty, broken, dirty, quick, fast, old, new.</i> Concrete feelings and number</p> <p>DIRECT <i>Suggested vocabulary: me, you, he, she, we, number, page, next, go, turn, come, stop, want, have, help, look, make</i></p> <p>REASON AND PREDICT <i>Suggested vocabulary: you, me, he, she, we, they, good, bad, better, best, next, the, descriptive page, future, past</i></p> <p>PLAN AND EVALUATE: <i>why, because, if</i></p> <p>NEGOTIATE <i>Suggested vocabulary: if, then, but, no, not, you, me, why, because</i></p> <p>EXPRESS FEELINGS <i>Suggested vocabulary: hot, cold, hungry, thirsty, cross, tired, sick, happy</i></p>
<p>Steps towards Purple communication environment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■1.Through symbol, signs or VOCA <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Begin to use extended core vocabulary and associated vocabulary in both communication and learning – Talk about items, situations not present and relate them to current activity – In symbol book or VOCA move between pages in communication 2.To access technology either directly or through pointer control or by using scan and select through any of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Mouse – Tracker Ball – Joystick – One step switch, two switch step scan 	

Communication environment 7: Purple; Semi and Formal Pathway. Formal symbolic communication

<p>Learning Readiness The child is ready to work at this level if they are: Here 2 or 3 abstract symbols may be combined and learners begin to use grammatical rules</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Use extended core vocabulary and associated vocabulary in both communication and learning ■ Talk about items, situations not present and relate them to current activity ■ move between pages In symbol book or VOCA while communicating ■ have established a means of accessing technology. 	<p>AAC Environment Continue to develop visual language in the class environment by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Ensuring the communication book and VOCAS are available in all activities ■ Support new learning activities with communication boards to use alongside the core vocabulary in books and on VOCAS ■ Creating an environment where all feel comfortable in using the symbol support ■ Providing a range of ICT to enable access to learning (CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT ROM), print (Eg Clicker), mark making (paint package), literature (talking books) maths (Early number) etc.
<p>Practitioner Skills Practitioners should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Familiarise themselves and practice using extended core vocabulary. ■ Extend fluency in signing (Trained Sign support required). ■ Model use of the core vocabulary to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – explain similarities and differences – to proffer opinions – to challenge facts “how come , what if.” ■ Express feelings of people ,characters Eg frightened, silly. ■ Support small group work with AAC user developing all children’s skills in : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – waiting for responses – allowing time to initiate – giving time to express opinions – enabling them to resolve conflict through their AAC. ■ Model and give time for the creation of new vocabulary through use of : Not / combine / part of symbol / similar to. 	<p>Language function and vocabulary Encourage child to use point/eye point, sign, symbol, VOCA and / or vocalisation to express the following language functions</p> <p>Language to play alongside others – NEGOTIATE Suggested Vocabulary: <i>I, you, he, her, we, they, can, do, not, go, turn, come, stop, play, work, look, see, talk, have, put</i> RESOLVE SOCIAL CONFLICT Suggested Vocabulary: <i>If, but, might, perhaps, prefer, disagree, now, later, next, mistake</i> COMPLAIN Suggested Vocabulary: <i>Fair, cheat, do, did, don’t know, “not” with all verbs,</i></p> <p>Language to learn GIVING AND SHARING INFORMATION TO CLARIFY THINKING Suggested Vocabulary: <i>Extend activity pages for home, school, Extend number page to include coins, addition. Extend colour, shape page adding darker, lighter etc. Extend food, people, places, clothes pages Extend time page to include months and seasons</i> DESCRIBE FEATURE Suggested Vocabulary: <i>Extend feelings page, add to describing pages as flaps in books or popups on VOCA. Colour, shape, texture, feature, position symbols</i> QUESTION TO SEEK EXPLANATIONS Suggested Vocabulary: <i>How, when, might, may can,</i> PLAN AND EVALUATE Suggested Vocabulary: <i>First, next, last, before, after, future, past, good, better, best, prefer</i> PERSONAL LANGUAGE TO: – GIVE OPINIONS Suggested Vocabulary: <i>Disagree, prefer, better, best, mistake, joke, idea</i> – EXPRESS FEELINGS Suggested Vocabulary: <i>Physical and mood states e.g. hungry, cold etc. And frightened, nasty, dangerous</i> TO CREATE NEW MEANINGS Suggested Vocabulary: <i>Not, combine, part of, similar to</i></p>
<p>Steps towards Grey communication environment: Through sign symbol or VOCA use extended core vocabulary to – 1. Form working relationships and resolve social conflict 2. To clarify thinking, ideas, feelings and events 3. To give opinions</p>	

