

DEVELOPING A PERSONAL DICTIONARY

What is a Personal Dictionary?

A completed Personal Dictionary is a personalized reference guide used with non-speaking individuals. The guide describes the student's methods of communication and gives options for how the partner can respond. It is developed by those who know the student intimately. An example sheet of a Personal Dictionary and a blank form are attached.



*"Not all
communication
is spoken."*

In order to complete a Personal Dictionary you will need to be familiar with:

HOW DO WE COMMUNICATE?

- refer to the generic list attached of some of the ways non-speaking individuals may be communicating
- some of the methods listed may be used independent from one another or they may be used in a variety of combinations (refer to Personal Dictionary example)
- your team may decide that there are other ways besides those listed that the student communicates
- your understanding and awareness of the ways in which the student may be communicating will increase your observational skills and assist you in completing the Personal Dictionary

WHY DO WE COMMUNICATE?

- refer to the basic list attached for some of the underlying reasons why we all communicate
- your understanding and knowledge of the list will assist you in trying to respond to the student, enhance better communication and assist you in completing a Personal Dictionary for the student

HOW DO I COMPLETE THE PERSONAL DICTIONARY?

- Use the information from the How Do We Communicate? list and closely observe the student over a 1-2 week period, identifying and documenting all the different behaviors you observe.
- List any additional behaviors that you may have observed in the past that are not on your list.
- Use the information from the Why Do We Communicate? list and as you observe a behavior note what you thought the intent might have been given the context of the situation.
- When completing the "How to Respond" column keep in mind and include in your verbal response all three elements: *identify the behavior*, *interpret the behavior* (intent), and *state how to respond* (see e.g. page attached).
- School staff to complete their form independent from parents/guardians.
- School staff and parents meet and discuss results and develop a composite form.
- Review form 2-3x per year to keep it up-to-date, and remember to date the form.
- Completed Personal Dictionary should be readily available in student's environment(s).

Personal Dictionary
(Communicative Intent Log)
Sample

Student: _____

Birthdate: _____

Date: _____

<p align="center">BEHAVIOURS OBSERVED</p> <p align="center">"This is what I do."</p>	<p align="center">INTENT/WHAT IT MEANS</p> <p align="center">"This is what I am trying to tell you."</p>	<p align="center">HOW TO RESPOND</p> <p align="center">"What you can say and/or do"</p> <p align="center">1. Identify behaviour 2. Interpret behaviour 3. Respond</p>
<p>1. Looking away, turns head away</p> <p>2. Head down, hands sometimes in mouth, eyes closed</p> <p>3. Finger or thumb in mouth, low pitched hum</p> <p>4. Loud, low pitched vocalization (whining), rocking in chair, agitated facial expression.</p> <p>5. Stick out tongue while drinking.</p>	<p>1. Not interested in activity</p> <p>2. a) Tired, sleepy b) Bored, not interested in activity</p> <p>3. Unhappy,wants out of wheelchair and to be left alone.</p> <p>4. I'm hungry and I want to eat now.</p> <p>5. I don't want any more to drink.</p>	<p>1. "J", you're looking away. You're telling me you don't like _____. Let's see if there is something else you like better." Offer "J" the choice of a different activity.</p> <p>2. a) "J", you're closing your eyes and putting your head down. You must be tired." Give "J" 15 - 20 minutes to rest before starting another activity. b) "J", you're closing your eyes and putting your head down. I think you must be bored with _____. Two more minutes & we'll switch to something else." Attempt to challenge "J" to continue with activity for a bit longer before switching to next activity or offering a choice.</p> <p>3. a) "J", your finger is in your mouth & you are humming. You want out of your chair and some time on your own. Take "J" out of the wheelchair and put "J" on floor. Try not to disturb him for 15 - 20 minutes b) "J", your finger is in your mouth & you are humming. "J", you're telling me you want out of your chair but we need to finish this activity & then we'll get out onto the floor. c) "J", your finger is in your mouth & you are humming. You want out of your chair & some time on your own. We were just on the floor, now it is time to work in your chair. When we finish, then we'll take another break."</p> <p>4. "J", I can tell by your face and voice that you're not happy." Get "J" something to eat ASAP.</p> <p>5. "J",you're sticking your tongue out. I think you're saying you don't want any more to drink." Stop giving "J" a drink. If he hasn't had much to drink, offer more in about 30 - 45 minutes or at end of meal.</p>

**Personal Dictionary
(Communicative Intent Log)**

Student _____

Date _____

Birthdate _____

BEHAVIOURS OBSERVED
"This is what I do"

INTENT/WHAT IT MEANS
"This is what I am trying to tell you"

HOW TO RESPOND
"What you can say and/or do:
1. Identify behaviour
2. Interpret behaviour
3. Respond