**Malkara Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) Framework**

**Introductory Statement**

Malkara Specialist School has 88 students from early childhood through to Year 6. The majority of students attending Malkara have Complex Communication Needs (CCN). Malkara prioritises each student to develop his or her own effective means of communicating. This professional commitment is a major focus of each student’s Individual Learning Plan (ILP). In partnership with therapy service providers each student’s communication capability and mode is profiled using a range of assessment instruments such as the Communication Matrix. A variety of Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) systems are used across the school and all staff are supported and required to become excellent communication partners, as the school is aware that the attitudes, beliefs and knowledge of communication partners is critical for the success of AAC. Communication partner training and expectations lead to the skills supporting effective communication with all students.

**Who is AAC for?**

Anyone who has Complex Communication Needs (CCN), that is anyone who has difficulties communicating with speech alone, ie. people who are non-verbal, people who only have a limited number of spoken words or people whose speech is difficult to understand.

**Malkara AAC Value statement**

AAC is every staff member’s responsibility.

**What is AAC?**

* Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) is an area of specialised clinical and education practice that provides options and interventions for people with Complex Communication Needs. The term *augmentative* means supplemental or additional to speech. Augmentative techniques (eg. gestures and facial expressions) are commonly used when communicating and interacting with others.
* the term *alternative* acknowledges that there are some individuals whose speech is sufficiently impaired that they must rely completely on standard and special augmentative techniques, which do not augment speech but are alternatives to speech. (Vanderheiden & Yoder, 1996)

(Adapted from Speech Pathology Australia AAC Position Paper 2004)

**Definitions in AAC?**

**AAC SYSTEM**

An AAC system is an integrated group of components, including symbols, aids, strategies and techniques used by individuals to enhance communication. The system serves to supplement any gestural, spoken and/or written communication abilities. (American Speech and Hearing Association, 1991)

**UNAIDED AND AIDED AAC**

UNAIDED AAC: All techniques that do not require any physical aids eg. gesture, sign, facial expression.

AIDED AAC: Techniques where some type of physical object or device is used eg. object symbols, communication boards, books, wallets. Aided AAC is often divided into high technology and low technology or low/light systems.

(Speech Pathology Australia AAC Position Paper, 2004)

**AAC Approaches at Malkara**

* Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS)
* Aided Language Displays (ALD), including those from CHAT-Now
* Pragmatic Organisation Dynamic Display (PODD)
* Core Vocabulary
* Other evidence based approaches such as Proloquo2Go
* Each of these systems is supported in either low technology or high technology format as appropriate.

**AAC at Malkara in Action**

We strive towards every student with Complex Communication Needs having an AAC system and clear, consistently taught and modelled AAC goals. This whole- school focus is supported by the following professional commitments:

* every child will have an identified communication system
* every child will have an identified ‘yes’ and ‘no’ response
* every child will have access to their own personalised AAC system all the time
* AAC systems will be used across the school
* every staff member will model a range of AAC systems as appropriate for the student
* PODDs will be available and used throughout the school day, with modelling occurring at least 50% of the day
* other AAC approaches will be modelled, as appropriate
* student Communication Profiles will reflect the current level of skill as reflected in the Communication Matrix
* AAC approaches are supported by engineering the environment for successful communication in a range of situations.
* Staff are expected to be familiar with a range of pathways in PODD and to demonstrate how to use communication for a range of pragmatic functions, including commenting, questioning, requesting, continuing, cessation, negation and rejection.

**Malkara Endorses the Communication Bill of Rights**

