

# LANGUAGE DISORDER AUSTRALIA



## AAC Club – More than just fun and games

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**Mancel College/Language  
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- Today we have plenty of high-tech, relatively low-cost options.
- If you have had the privilege to work with an AAC user, you will know what a rewarding experience this can be.

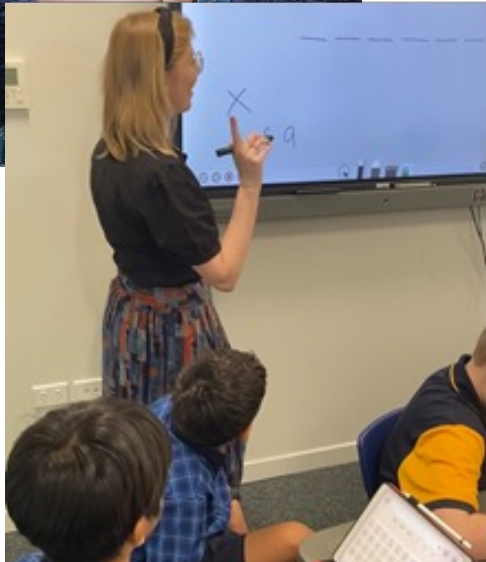


- Research indicates that despite ease of access, AAC users in schools are **not given enough opportunities to incorporate their AAC into their learning.**
- Research into AAC in schools has focused mostly on functional communication, rather than AAC use for academic or social purposes.

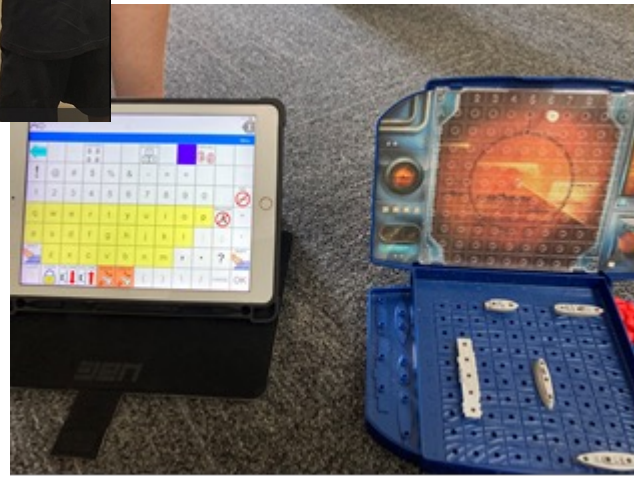




- I am a Senior Speech Pathologist at **Mancel College**.
- The college is a specialised school run by **Language Disorder Australia**, catering specifically for children with communication disorders.
- We have reduced class sizes, extra school assistants and multiple Allied Health Professionals on staff.



- I noticed upon commencing work at Mancel College, that while there were a number of students whose external SLPs had recommended/instigated use of AAC, it was **rarely seen in the classroom or the playground**.
- One of the reasons for this seemed to be that students were reluctant to bring the device into the classroom, or were completely reliant on being prompted to do so.
- Many of the AAC users were not independent in use of their device.



- An **'AAC Club'** (small group intervention) was commenced, with the aim being to **increase AAC users' confidence by providing enjoyable opportunities to use AAC in an adult-led, play-based setting.**
- The idea was that increased confidence and enjoyment of communication may positively impact AAC use in class.
- AAC users from Years 4-9 were invited to participate in a **weekly 30 minute 'AAC Club'** facilitated by a Speech Pathologist and Occupational Therapist. Between 2-4 students attended weekly, initially.

Sessions ran as follows:

- 10 minutes **weekend 'Chat' using AAC**
- 15 minutes **gameplay using AAC** (spoken instructions/exclamations generated by AAC, including adult participation)
- 5 minutes throughout to discuss issues around social interactions e.g. how do we decide who goes first?

## Changes:

So far the group is in its 4<sup>th</sup> Term. There have been some changes since the beginning of 2023, including:

- An **increase in size** - we have doubled in size (currently 8 members)
- Our amazing OT was replaced by another excellent speech pathologist

## Observations:

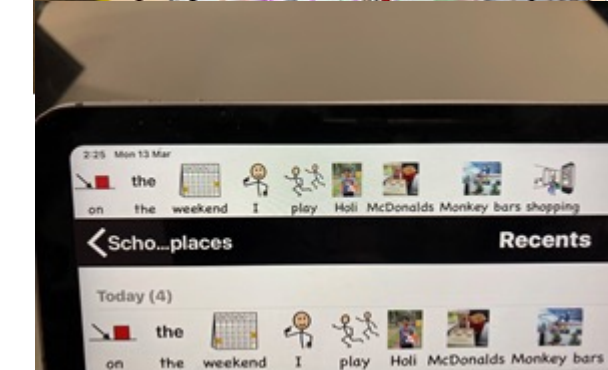
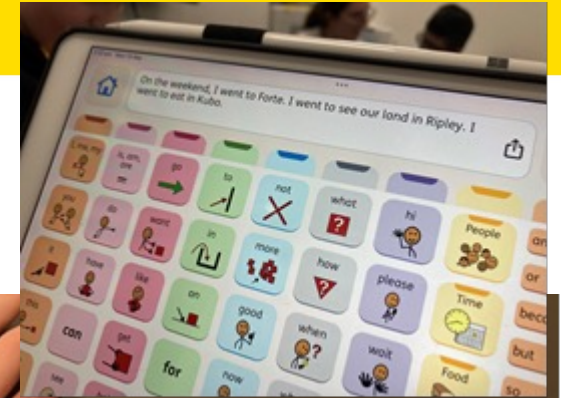
Some positives noted include:

- Students **more willing to independently bring devices** with them to AAC Club
- Students began independently searching for vocabulary
- Some students bringing AAC into classroom spontaneously, others when prompted (less refusal)
- One student noted to start taking AAC out onto the playground
- Responses to 'What did you do on the weekend?' became **longer and more detailed**

## Feedback:

Parents reported:

- Students seem to use AAC more at school following participation in the group
- Helps to diversify learning and comprehension methods
- Initiative to use AAC when not understood has increased
- Increased confidence and willingness to 'talk'





## Conclusions

- Group work using AAC appears to have a positive impact on individual usage in the school environment.
- Incorporation into the broader classroom from an early age is extremely important for later success.

## Outcomes for Mancel College

- Creation of **awareness videos** for AAC to familiarise staff and wider community with AAC.
- Creation of a **Multimodal Communication Project Team** to address use of low- and high-tech AAC usage around the school.
- At the end of 2022, Mancel College joined **Assistiveware's Proloquo Classroom Trial**. Prep-1/2 have access to 4 'Talkers' per classroom in order to facilitate communication and learning. Feedback from parents and staff has so far been extremely positive.



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## **FOR MORE INFORMATION**

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