

DEVELOPING A PERSONAL DICTIONARY

What is a Personal Dictionary?

A completed Personal Dictionary is a personalized reference guide to assist individual(s) communicating with a non-speaking student. The guide describes the student's method of communication - including sounds facial expressions and movements - and options for responding to the student's attempt to communicate. It is developed by those who know the student intimately. Completing a personal dictionary may demand a fine-tuning of your observational skills. Attached is an example sheet of a Personal Dictionary and a blank form for your team to complete.



*"Not all
communication
is spoken."*

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

I. Why Do We Communicate? (see attached page)

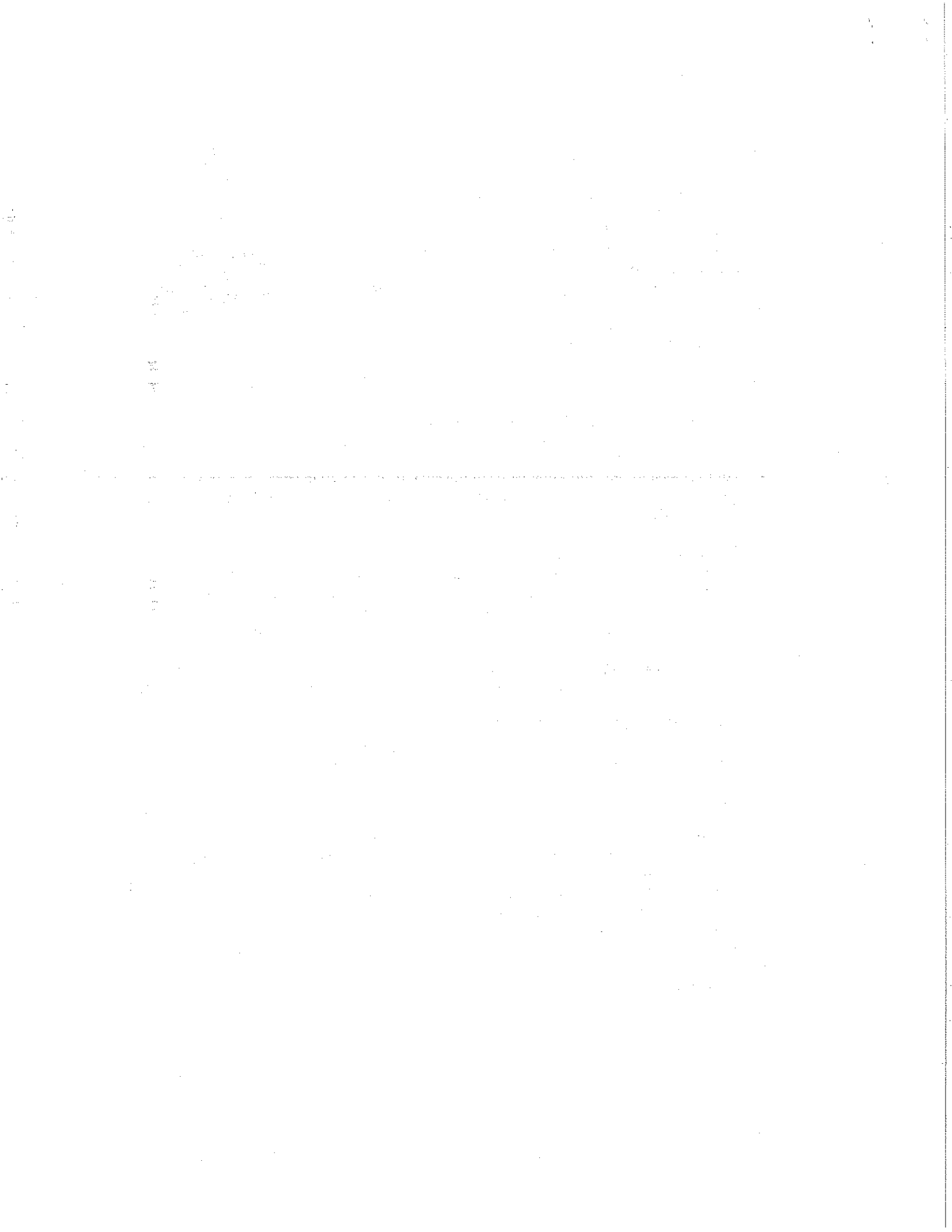
- generic list of some of the underlying reasons - expression of needs and wants and social interaction - about why we all communicate
- your understanding and knowledge of the list will assist you in trying to respond to the student, enhance better communication and assist you in completing a Personal Dictionary for the student

II. How Do I Communicate? (see attached page)

- generic list of some of the ways non-speaking students may be communicating
- some of the modes listed may be used independent from one another or they may be used in a variety of combinations (see examples on Personal Dictionary attached)
- your team may decide that there are other modes besides those listed that the student is using
- your understanding and awareness of options in which the student may be communicating will increase your observational skills and assist you in completing the Personal Dictionary

How do I complete the Personal Dictionary?

- Use the information from How Do I Communicate? handout 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? 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).
- 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).



WHY DO WE COMMUNICATE?

EXPRESSION OF NEEDS AND WANTS

- Indication of interrupted activity - Actions by the student directed towards the partner, which indicate the student's awareness that the partner interrupted a shared activity (e.g. "Do it again.")
- Acceptance - Acts or utterances which indicate intention to receive an object from another or to accept the partner's offer.
- Protest/Rejection - Acts or utterances which indicate objection to the action or lack of action of another. Acts or utterances which indicate refusal of the partner's offer.
- Communication of choices - Indication of preference between two concrete objects, concepts, etc. presented by the partner.
- Request for assistance - Acts or utterances which attempt to direct the partner to provide physical assistance.
- Request for object/action - Attempts to direct the partner to provide an object or activity within or outside the immediate environment.

SOCIAL INTERACTION

- Attention to partner - Physical and/or visual orientation to partner and/or partner's action(s).
- Reciprocal action - Acts or utterances directed towards a partner which suggest turn taking.
- Greeting/Closing - Acts or utterances which acknowledge the partner's arrival or departure.
- Request for attention of self - Attempts by the student to gain the partner's attention to themselves. These acts serve to gain the partner's attention but do not direct the partner to a specific object, concept, etc..
- Comment - Acts or utterances which label, describe, or provide information about a person, event, or object.

HOW DO I COMMUNICATE?

- Gaze - Looking at a person, object or place within a communicative context.
- Vocalization - Use of vocal sounds which are unintelligible to the listener and which are used for more than one intent.
- Physical Tone - Any consistent increase or decrease in body stiffness or rigidity as a means of communication.
- Physical Movement - Use of physical movement or action in the direct pursuit of a goal within a communicative context.
- Facial Expression - Use of all or any parts of the face as a means of communication.
- Pointing - Use of index finger, hand or foot extended towards an object or person as a means of communication. This does not include direct selection techniques to access photographs, line drawings or symbols on a communication display.
- Conventional Gesture & Sign Language - Use of socially learned gestures or pantomime as a means of communication. Use of a symbolic gesture taken or adapted from a recognized sign language system. This category also includes distinctive gestures which are consistently used by the student to indicate an object, concept, etc..
- Photographs - Use of photographs which represent persons, objects, activities, etc. as a means of communication.
- Line Drawings - Use of line drawings or pictures which represent persons, objects, activities, etc. as a means of communication.
- Symbols - Use of a symbolic system as a means of communication.
- Speech - Use of speech, vocal sound, or verbalizations which are word approximations intelligible to the listener. These vocal patterns must be consistently used to indicate a object, concept, etc..

Personal Dictionary

(Communicative Intent Log)

Sample

Student: _____

Birthdate: _____

Date: _____

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" <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify behaviour 2. Interpret behaviour 3. Respond
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Looking away, turns head away 2. Head down, hands sometimes in mouth, eyes closed 3. Finger or thumb in mouth, low pitched hum 4. Loud, low pitched vocalization (whining), rocking in chair, agitated facial expression. 5. Stick out tongue while drinking. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Not interested in activity 2. a) Tired, sleepy b) Bored, not interested in activity 3. Unhappy, wants out of wheelchair and to be left alone. 4. I'm hungry and I want to eat now. 5. I don't want any more to drink. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 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. 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. 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." 4. "J", I can tell by your face and voice that you're not happy." Get "J" something to eat ASAP. 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.

Personal Dictionary

(Communicative Intent Log)

Student: _____

Birthdate: _____

Date: _____

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