

Communication Boards: Intentions / Set Up / Operation

The communication board is an integral aspect of the Walker Learning Approach that facilitates student engagement and empowers students to have greater ownership of their learning.

The communication board is dynamic and integrated into all aspects of daily learning and activities. It has a number of key intentions and symbolically represents the core elements of the WLA philosophy: it is far more than a static, stand-alone notice board.

Children enjoy using the communication board and regularly make comments such as:

- We feel like we are being trusted more
- We feel more grown up like secondary students
- We like knowing what is happening during the day
- It's good being able to see who has been affirmed and why they were affirmed.
- It's great being able to add to the class meeting agenda.

Key Intentions for the Communication Board

To build children's:

- Independence
- Organisation skills
- Time management.

To assist with:

- Pro social skills
- Interactions
- The ritualization of commencing a day together
- How to publicly affirm each other
- Meeting with the teacher informally at the commencement of each day

To provide opportunities to:

- Consider and reflect on issues of the community or world for discussion at class meetings
- Opt in to clinic groups or offer to conduct an optional clinic group
- Be updated with daily notices and events of the class and school community

Preparation of the Communication Board

The communication board is prepared by the teacher at the commencement of each term with all the following key elements included:

- Daily timetable
- Weekly timetable
- Subject focus learning intentions
- Class meeting agenda
- Focus children roster
- Affirmations
- Clinic groups
- Statement of intent
- Ideas for clinic groups
- Ideas

The teacher can then add in any additional elements that reflect their own personality and can also include children's ideas.

The board:

- Must be uncluttered
- Does NOT include lots of other items or notices.
- Provides easy access for children to stand and gather around

Introducing and Operating the Communication Board

Introduce the communication board to the children, explain the intentions and operation of the board and review all of the core elements. Talk through each part of the board, how to use it and why it is important.

The children will:

- Need several weeks of support from the teacher to ensure that the process, operation and intentions of the board are achieved
- Have a diary to enter particular clinic groups, commitments, notices or reminders that are relevant to them
- Need time and practice and support from the teacher
- Be allowed into class 10 minutes before the bell to start accessing the board and talking and engaging with each other

The teacher:

- Is present at the board to greet the children each morning
- Will model and explain how to use the board every morning for many weeks
- Refers to the board and models using the board every day
- Some teachers assign a communication board monitor on a weekly basis to assist with updates and tidying the board each morning. This is a popular role.

Communication Board: Development of Social and Emotional Maturity and Building Relationships

The communication board is a dynamic, highly interactive tool that supports the voice of the child and teacher and builds independence. The WLA philosophy supports and embraces the full use of technology in a wide range of ways – however the communication board is deliberately not an electronic board.

One of the intentions of the communication board is to assist students in their emotional and social development and maturity. This is facilitated by giving the children:

- Time to practice the skills of communication face to face
- Publishing or writing or displaying notices, information and affirmations to each other in front of each other in real time, not virtual time or from the safety and anonymity of their homes or bedrooms.

In the current societal context children's technological maturity and skill levels are generally more advanced than their emotional and social maturity. The intentional use of a non electronic board provides a means of communicating that requires children to talk, face each other, interact socially, read each others facial expressions and physically interact at the commencement of each day.

The communication board provides children with a range of natural and individual opportunities to develop their social and emotional maturity and empathic understanding of others. These opportunities provide the platform for the deepening of children's understanding of themselves and others and facilitate the development of authentic relationships.

Relationships (teacher-child and child-child) set the foundation for children to flourish and learning to be optimised.