

## 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).