


Ponder the research 

- Students with FASD often have language difficulties that may not be obvious.
- Students may have limited understanding because of receptive and expressive language deficits and social communication weaknesses. (S. Clarren)
- Communication leads to community (P. May)
- Language plays an important role in the cognitive, social, emotional and behavioural development of children. (Willinger et al, 2003)
- In the school system we learn to talk AND we talk to learn. Language is being used for two different purposes.
- Language and communication are the principle means that teachers and students use to interact.
- Language is how educators deliver the curriculum and language is the curriculum
- . . . Therefore, if a student has a communication impairment they are at a disadvantage.



## What is FASD?

FASD describes a spectrum of disorders caused by prenatal exposure to alcohol. Children living with FASD have a brain-based disability.

Three or more domains of the central nervous system are impacted when you are living with FASD. The C.N.S. domains are:

- Cognition
- Academic achievement
- Memory
- Communication
- Executive function
- Adaptive behavior
- Sensory/motor
- Attention/activity level

To view the eLearning module which accompanies this information pamphlet and checklist, please visit our website.

It is important to remember that each student is an individual with varied strengths and needs. It is through building a relationship with our learners and getting to know their strengths and needs that we can discover which strategies will allow us to communicate successfully with them.

[www.fasdoutreach.ca](http://www.fasdoutreach.ca)



Funded by:  
BC Ministry of Education  
POPFASD  
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## COMMUNICATION



**For Learners with FASD  
and other  
Complex Learning Needs**

# POPFAS

**Communication** is the exchange of ideas and information through language and non-verbal behaviour.

#### Essential Tips!

1. Use clear language
2. Use positive phrasing
3. Be consistent
4. Use visual supports
5. Give directions one at a time
6. Give directions in order
7. Ask concrete questions
8. Ask the learner to show understanding
9. Allow more time
10. Teach abstract language

#### Reflect:



- Teachers need to carefully consider the language used in instruction and discipline.
- Behavioural reactions occur when students experience language problems.
- What message is the behaviour conveying?
- Abstract language is when we talk about things we can't see, touch, taste, hear or smell.

#### Adapt to the communication needs of our students.

There are 8 Keys + a Master Key that impact learners with FASD. Are they in place in your communication?

- Structured
- Concrete
- Consistency
- Simplicity
- Routine
- Repetition
- Specific
- Supervised
- TRUSTING RELATIONSHIP

(adapted from Deb Evensen)

#### Do you . . .

- Use clear language – drop all extra words, think of communication as a telegram, repeat using key words?
- Speak face-to-face with the student; use the student's name?
- Use positive phrasing – say what to do, not what not to do; avoid negatives, show what you mean?
- Teach abstract language and words? (idioms, metaphors, feelings, sarcasm etc.)
- Use visual supports – prompts, gestures, concrete examples, physical modelling; class rules, story boards, class schedules, maps?
- Give directions/instructions one at a time – less is more?
- Use writing, gestures and visual cues along with verbal directions?
- Give directions in order - use first and then – state in the order that things will happen?
- Ask concrete questions, simple questions, probe for exact information?

- Avoid rhetorical questions – tell what you want?
- Limit the number of questions asked?
- Avoid asking questions when the answer does not solve a problem?
- Use concrete words in rules?
- Ask the students to show they understand?
- Allow more time, allow opportunities for processing time?
- Use three nonverbal aspects of communication - ensuring attention, proximity, and a quiet calm voice to ensure communication?
- Teach students to communicate in an acceptable manner?
- Use multi-modal strategies (visual, auditory, tactile, and kinesthetic)?

#### Are you . . .

- Consistent – repeat the same words; use a simple direct phrase and repeat it; use the name of the learner; allow time?
- Specific and concise in your word choice?
- Simple and concrete?

Notes 🎵 and next steps 👣:

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