

Neuroscience and Communication

Communicating with the Listener in Mind, and Reframing

Information to support effective teaching, learning and leading based on neuro-science theory and principals is found in the 'New Numeracy, New Thinking' Handbook, authored by Prof. Allan Parker, assisted by Virginia Norrie and Charmaine Driver. Key points are provided here, but all school staff are referred to the Handbook for a more thorough presentation of ideas and strategies.

- Acknowledge the listener's contribution, stealing nouns and verbs from the listener's contributions.
- Reframing means we add optimism and dynamic potential instead of describing and creating a static condition.
e.g., We add the following phrases to our speech...
 - "Up until now"
 - "Yet"
 - "And you could/can..."
 - "In addition to"
 - "Can we....?"
 - "Would...?"
 - "Could...?"
 - "Might....?"
 - "If....?"
 - "Let's..."

We learn through experimenting and practising these positive reframing options. Be encouraged to record notes of protocols used and observations, effects, and outcomes as you engage in communication with colleagues, students, leaders, family members, and the wider community:

- Connection of ideas and concepts
- Engagement
- Teacher self-rating of positive framing in the lesson.

Restating our message and using language variation to include more options and/or more possibilities supports the listener to consider:

- **WHY** – The reason for reframing is to increase positive impact and receptivity of words/meaning and enhance semantic memory development.
- **WHAT** – Remove limiting and provocative language and offer the same essential message.
- **HOW** – Replace key words with other words to enhance choice, expand vocabulary, and understanding of words. Observe receptivity and impact.

Instead of saying, "You have to do something," replace it with, "It's important for us to do something."

Be encouraged to test and record specific reframing strategies used and make notes of observations about the gains made for listeners, and yourself as a result.

As educators, we promote the use of

- Motor cross-patterning
- Multi-sensory memory techniques
- Positive framing
- Optimal body positioning
 - proximity
 - angle
 - tension
 - height
 - pace
 - volume
 - pause

- Memory linking gestures

The world is full of magical things patiently waiting for our senses to grow sharper. W.B. Yeates

Definitive and Non-definitive Language

Derived from neuroscience research, we think about the differences between definitive and non-definitive language. This approach helps us achieve positive impacts and outcomes with students, colleagues, family members, and the wider community. It assists us to be professionals making a real difference and demonstrating the power of influence.

As we reflect on how we feel when we hear the following examples of definitive language, reflecting also enables us to consider our likely response to definitive language, compared to our feelings and responses when we encounter a speaker using non-definitive language.

This helps us recognise the importance of non-definitive language in our day-to-day practice and how helpful this is when working with our students, teams, squad, and wider community.

Definitive language	Non-definitive language
I can't	I can't yet...
I can't	So, you don't think you can?
I/you must...	It's important that...
I don't want to...	You're not ready to do it yet?
It's too hard	So, you'd like to find an easier way?
It's too hard	So, we might break it in to bits and do it bit by bit
That's not going to work	Shall we do it another way?

The following table gives us a ready reckoner to assist us to maximise choice, self-determination, life quality, engagement, and positive outcomes.

Modal Operators (Reduce choice and increase the likelihood of disagreement)	Reframe to... (Maximise choice and maximise the likelihood of agreement)
• Should • Shouldn't • Must • Mustn't have to • Gotto • Ought to • Can't	• Need to • Prefer not to • It's important to • It's important not to • It's important to • It's important to • Not able to yet

Universals (Words that imply distortion or exaggeration are likely to stimulate disagreement)

• All • Always • Every • Everything • Everybody • Everywhere • Nobody • Nowhere	• Never • Absolutely • Totally • Completely • It could be nowhere to be found • Just rarely • It seems like nobody	• Almost all • Frequently or too often • Most • It seems like everything • It seems like everybody • It seems like everywhere • More than we thought or more than we expected • Almost all
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Dealing with Potential Conflicts

The most important thing about dealing with potential conflicts is to keep the focus away from the opponents. The conflict must never be allowed to become a question of their qualities or track record. As soon as the conflict becomes personal, it easily gets fuelled by emotions like pride and jealousy. Instead, focus on the issue and evaluate how to make the best decision to support the vision and goal—because that is something to respect.

Make sure that everyone is given the opportunity to explain their point of view, and even more importantly, be listened to. There's a reason we have twice as many ears as mouths.

Feedback to Your Friend and Foe

Personal evaluation has one goal: to improve the relationship between those involved. When the team has decided to have a feedback session, it's entering a zone where care and gentleness are mixed with honesty. Any act intending to hurt is banned and will immediately harm the team—breaking the spell of trust for a long time.

Instead, everyone present should have the goal to contribute to a better social climate. Everyone should search within themselves and each other to identify the different roles played in the team's relationships, good or bad.

Ask:

What is my responsibility in this relationship?

Which part have I contributed to?

The way to achieve this is to give each other feedback with the goal of improving the relationship. If someone is too upset to act constructively, wait until the pressure has eased before giving feedback.

Feedback can be given in pairs or as a group. A one-on-one conversation may be safer if privacy is a concern. Group feedback can promote gentleness, though it sometimes dilutes honesty. If done as a group, allow one person to receive feedback from everyone else (one at a time) before moving on to the next person.

Staff Communication

- Pigeonholes
 - Each staff member has a pigeonhole which is used for personal or classroom notes/messages. It is necessary to check these several times a day and to clear them regularly. **DO NOT USE PIGEONHOLES FOR STORING CUPS, MATERIALS AND OTHER ITEMS.**
- Emails
 - A daily email is sent to all staff to communicate the staff changes to the day ahead.
 - Other emails provide updates and information about time-critical information or to forward material from the Department or School office.
 - Provide a vehicle for staff to disseminate information required by colleagues.
- School Facebook Page is a private page. All staff can apply to the Principal or P and C Chair to join the page (10) Darling Point Special School | Facebook
- At a Glance emails provide a summary of events and activities from the recent past as an update for staff, families and the wider community. Staff are welcome to provide items for inclusion, to the Principal, by 3.00 pm each Friday.

We are all reminded of the agreement in perpetuity between the school, the Department, and the QTU, that staff emails except the Principal, Deputy Principals, Guidance Officer, Business Manager and Administration Officer, are NOT shared with parents or family members. Family members including parents/carers/guardians who wish to email a member of staff can do so by writing to the admin@darlingpointspecs.eq.edu.au address.

Communication Protocols

Double check that what is communicated in any way is a statement of fact. Details to note when writing any document or communicating in the work context (and generally for that matter) follow:

1. Know Your Audience and Purpose

- Identify who will read the document: parents/carers, colleagues, support staff, therapists, administration.
- Match the language and tone to the purpose (e.g. informative, supportive, formal).
- Avoid jargon unless it is explained or commonly understood in your context.

2. Use Clear and Consistent Structure

- Stick to consistent formatting.
- Use headings and subheadings.
- Align sections (e.g. Introduction → Strengths → Needs → Goals → Recommendations).
- Maintain consistency in spelling, especially for Australian English (e.g. "behaviour" not "behavior").
- Use full sentences—avoid dot points unless the format calls for it.
- Be concise but complete: say what needs to be said, clearly and without repetition.

3. Use Correct Grammar, Punctuation and Capitalisation

- Avoid run-on sentences and sentence fragments.
- Always capitalise:
 - Names (e.g. "Jayden" not "jayden")
 - Specific programs or plans (e.g. "Individual Curriculum Plan", "General Capabilities")
 - School names and departments
- Use punctuation correctly:
- Avoid comma splices (joining two independent sentences with a comma).
- Use full stops at the end of complete sentences.
- Use apostrophes correctly (e.g. "student's learning" for singular, "students' learning" for plural).

4. Ensure Accuracy and Objectivity

- Avoid making assumptions—only report on observed or documented behaviours.
- Use specific examples, not generalisations:
 -  "Liam can follow a two-step instruction with visual support."
 -  "Liam is good at listening."
- Be strength-based but truthful; balance strengths and needs.

5. Use Professional, Respectful Language

- Use people-first or identity-affirming language depending on context:
- "Student with autism" or "autistic student"—whichever aligns with school or family preference.
- Avoid judgmental or emotional language:
 -  "Emily refuses to do work."
 -  "Emily currently requires support to begin tasks."

6. Proofread Carefully (More Than Once!)

- Read aloud to catch awkward phrasing or errors.
- Ask a colleague to review complex documents (e.g. ICPs, EAPs).
- Use spelling and grammar tools, but don't rely solely on them.

7. Include Data and Evidence Where Appropriate

- Reference assessment results, curriculum levels, goals, and observable behaviour.
- When writing plans such as ICPs or PBSPs, ensure evidence links clearly to goals and strategies.

8. Keep Timelines in Mind

- Start early—avoid last-minute writing.
- Leave time for:
 - Editing
 - Supervisor review
 - Uploading or submitting through school systems

9. Follow School Templates and Guidelines

- Use the correct template or platform (e.g. OneSchool, departmental formats).
- Stick to required word limits or format restrictions.
- Complete all required fields or sections.

10. Save and Label Your Work Clearly

- Use naming conventions that include date, student initials, and type of document.
- e.g., JS_ReportTerm2_2025.docx
- Store drafts in One Drive to support collaborative work.

Emails

Emails are used to

- Convey information in writing for efficiency and effectiveness.
- Quickly and conveniently communicate “good news” and celebrations.
- Send messages of encouragement and support.

Emails are NOT used to

- communicate urgent or critical matters - speak with the member of staff concerned by telephone or in person.
- for matters of controversy or real distress.
- communicate with teaching staff as a matter of urgency during teaching hours – teachers and aides only access emails during breaks and when on non-contact time.

When processing emails

- Do not share work or personal addresses at this school with students or parents/guardians – use DoJo or if email is needed, send to Principal or Deputy Principal to send on your behalf.
- Emails sent to multiple email addresses, should have the email addresses in the BCC box. This will not share other people’s email address- they may not have given permission for their address to be shared with a group.
- Establish a routine to check emails before class each day, where possible once throughout the day, and after class daily. It is recommended that teachers establish a process of disconnecting from emails before 8 am and after 4 pm but individual teachers may vary this procedure to best fit with whole-of-life activities and commitments. Be aware that alerts and frequent checking of emails leads to attempts to multi-task which leads to significant drops in productivity and wellbeing, and significant increases in stress and dissatisfaction. Be aware that if the sender needs to contact you urgently, they will see you in person, or phone. (Makes sure that your phone contacts on OneSchool and MyHR are complete and accurate, including details of next of kin for emergency contact).
- Reserve time to read and respond to email after a long period of focused work, or at the time of day when your energy and creativity are at their lowest. This means that you can do higher value work at other times.
- Set your email software to (receive messages only at certain times, so that you're not distracted by incoming messages. If you can't do this, at least make sure that you turn off audible and visual alerts.
- When you read email, you can waste hours if you don't use this time intelligently.
 - First, try using the ‘Two-Minute Rule’ the concept from David Allen, the author of ‘Getting Things Done’. When you read your mail – if the email will take less than two minutes to read and reply to, then take care of it right now, even if it's not a high priority. The idea behind this is that if it takes less than two minutes to action, it takes longer to read and then store the task away to do later than it would to just take care of the task now.
 - For emails that will take longer than two minutes to read or respond to, schedule time on your calendar, or add this as an action on your to-do List, to do later. Most email programs allow you to highlight, flag, or star messages that need a response, so use this handy feature whenever you can.
- Many of us also get lots of internal notifications. These are those FYI emails from the Department or Office or from team members who want to keep us in the loop. If you see your name in the cc field instead of the To field, chances are it's an FYI email. Consider filing it in a To Read folder and tackle it when you have time.
- Follow up if an expected response to an email you sent has not been received – assume the best.

- Reflect upon the tone, timing and content of an email message before it is sent. Emails written in haste or in anger rarely help to sort out issues or problems; in fact, a poorly written or emotionally charged email will almost always have the opposite effect. Too often, harshly written and 'angry' emails result in later regret. The rules for civility in e-mail are the same as in face-to-face meetings. Convey a positive tone in your e-mails which can set the stage for a cordial working relationship.
- Never say anything by e-mail that you wouldn't want published.
- Any inappropriate or offensive language or comments deemed to be defamatory will be automatically forwarded to the appropriate authorities.
- Make sure that emails are sent to the correct person who needs to know and/or who can address your question or issue.
- Be aware that some recipients receive a large number of emails daily.
- Do not reply to all unless everyone on the list needs to know the content of that email. E.g., only reply to the Home Economics Teacher regarding your meal requirements, only reply to the person who has shared Good News – not everyone wants their email box filled with personal remarks and needs.
- Ensure privacy and confidentiality to assured – double check what is written and to whom the email is to be sent before hitting the SEND button.
- Double check that everything you need to say in the email has been included before hitting the SEND button.
- Use the 'delay send' or 'schedule send' functions so that the email arrives to the recipient at a suitable time.
- Check the subject line of the email – make sure the subject is included and is clear.
- Monitor cyber security – never open an email until you have checked that it is likely from a valid sender.
- Can you imagine having an inbox with nothing in it? It almost sounds too good to be true! Although a completely empty inbox might be unrealistic for many of us, keeping our main inbox cleared can make us more organised, and help eliminate stress.
 - First, set up a simple filing system to help manage your mail.
 - You could use broad categories titled Action Items, Waiting, Reference, and Archives. If you're able to stay on top of your folders – particularly Action and Waiting folders – you could use them as an informal To Do List for the day.

- If four categories sounds too simplistic for your needs, you can set up a more detailed system. For instance, you could create a folder for every project that you're working on or have a set folder for each of your students or team members. The advantage when you create specific folders for processing email is that it makes it easier to search for past mail instead of scouring your entire email system, you can simply search in that particular folder.
- Outlook allows you to establish Rules that sort email into a particular folder as soon as it comes in. For instance, you might get several emails per day that notify you of issues related to students, families, school activities, options for your feedback etc. You want to receive these, because you want to see what's happening, but you don't want them to clutter your inbox, or worse, miss them in the clutter of a typical email box. This is where you could set up a rule in your email program that moves emails with, say, Student XXX in the subject line straight to the Student XXX folder as soon as they come in. This means that you don't need to manually file these emails and allows you to keep all of the emails relevant to particular students in one folder.
- One of the best things that you can do, to limit the amount of email you need to process, is to encourage people to send you less. For instance, if certain team members regularly send you long, drawn-out emails, let them know. Tell them gently but firmly that because of the demand on your time, you'd appreciate emails no longer than a paragraph or two. Anything longer than that should warrant a phone call. Alternatively, they could drop by for a discussion.
- Use emails for effective, efficient communication – DO NOT BECOME A SLAVE TO YOUR EMAILS..

Letters

Paper letters or letters sent as email attachments require

- Current school letterhead
- Principal signature.

Therefore, for any document that needs to go as a letter

- Write the file in Word
- Email the file to the Principal for checking, saving on letterhead as a PDF, and signing digitally, to be returned for your digital signature.
- Receive the PDF, digitally sign the letter, provide it in hard copy to the relevant recipient, or return to the Principal to be emailed to the relevant recipient
- Save the document on OneSchool.

Phone calls

- All class spaces and offices provide land lines for use by staff.
- Personal mobile numbers are not provided to parents, family members or students.
- The school mobile 0414-298-494 and the office numbers – 0733-480-111 (Manly) and 0730-261-444 (Lindum) are published on the school website.
- All staff phone contacts including emergency next of kin contacts are required on OneSchool and MyHR for school use.
- Provide your next of kin and agencies that might need to contact you urgently in school hours with the school numbers including the mobile. Be aware that messages are not relayed to staff while they are teaching except in an emergency.
- Be aware that phones must be switched off while teaching and supervising students. Separate arrangements are made for staff on excursions and work experience placement supervision but then only for staff to contact the school or emergency services as needed. Likewise, teachers working with students with emergency support needs may request permission to have their phone on during the school day but this is only for emergency support.
- Ensure that phone calls preserve confidentiality, dignity and represent the school's shared values.
- Be aware that in a busy school environment, you may overhear telephone conversation - preserve confidentiality and remember the Code of Conduct.

Social Media

The department supports the use of technology to advance its objectives and improve engagement with its stakeholders. With the inherently public nature of online communication, the department is committed to ensuring employees understand their responsibilities related to the appropriate use of social media. Employees must ensure their behaviour is consistent with the [Public Service Code of Conduct](#) and the department's values and objectives to ensure organisational commitments are achieved and the good reputation of the department and public service is upheld.

Accountability

- Employees have the right to contribute to public discussions on community and social issues in a personal capacity.
- Employees take reasonable steps to ensure that any published, forwarded or liked online content on social media, made in their personal capacity, is represented as their own views and not those of the department, the Queensland Government or as official Queensland Government statements.
- An employee's online communication must reflect the department's values and align with the [Code of Conduct for the Queensland Public Service](#) and the department's strategic objectives, [Standard of Practice](#) and related policies.
- Employees responsibly use public resources in accordance with department policies and procedures. This includes corporate knowledge and intellectual property, noting the requirements in copyright. Employees have limited personal use of ICT systems and devices, in accordance with the [Use of ICT systems procedure](#).

Confidentiality

- Employees follow information privacy legislation and maintain the confidentiality of information they have access to, that is not publicly available and use it only for its intended purpose.
- Employees obtain consent when using or disclosing personal information or images for work purposes, in accordance with the [Obtaining and managing student and individual consent procedure](#).
- Employees do not use confidential or privileged information to further their personal interests.
- Employees continue to maintain the confidentiality of official information when they leave public service employment.

Safe and Inclusive Environments

- When using social media for work purposes, employees promote safe and inclusive online environments that are free from harassment to ensure the wellbeing of students, other employees and members of the community.
- Employees contributing to public discussions on community and social issues in a personal capacity, ensure their online content is not disparaging towards colleagues, students and their parents/carers, school management or the education sector.
- Employees must maintain professional boundaries on social media and avoid accepting or initiating 'friend' requests or 'following' students, including recent ex-students (who may still be connected to current students).
- Employees never exchange personal images with students and never post student work samples, student images or confidential or personal student information obtained in the course of their duties on personal social media accounts.
- Further details are available at [Social media policy](#)

eSafety Commissioner Social Media Restrictions as at 10.12.2025

Starting December 10, 2025, new age restrictions prevent Australians under 16 years of age from creating or maintaining accounts on many social media platforms, aimed at enhancing online safety for young users.

These changes relate to:

- Suicide Prevention
- Public Content Access will be that content that is available without logging in
- Support resources – are available to help families, young people and schools navigate these changes
- Sources – age verification will be required for many platforms which are required to implement measures to verify the age of users. There will be no penalty for users but severe penalties for providers.

Staff are reminded to exercise their required duty of care when accessing social media and related platforms in the presence or for students. Whilst there are no current penalties through the office of the Safety Commissioner, the usual processes that apply under the Code of Conduct apply to staff enabling students to access social media outside of the age restrictions of 10th December 2025.

Parent/Carer Communication

- Class timetable and daily schedules sent electronically via DoJo and/or on paper for family and student transition and planning supports.
- Class Dojo-teachers should remind parents and family members/guardians/carers to communicate with them using Dojo.
- Verbal interactions.
- Phone calls.
- Formal or informal discussions or meetings.
- All communication should be documented as Contacts on OneSchool. DoJo contacts should be downloaded about monthly and uploaded to OneSchool.

Reports

From time to time, students or their representatives seek a report, or other information, related to the student's learning or development. This may also relate to applications for funding from a range of sources, including but not limited to the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS). There may also be requests from other agencies including NDIS support coordinators or professionals. Any report written is provided as a pdf file, on school letterhead, signed by the author and the Principal, and sent only to the student's parent or guardian for them to forward as desired. In unusual circumstances where the report is required by another entity, the Third Party Consent to Share form (DoE) must be signed off and filed in OneSchool prior.

