

# T.R.A.I.L.

## Technology Resources for Accessible Independent Learning

The TRAIL program is Mt Diablo Unified School District's program for implementing technology to support students with complex communication needs (those who have communication difficulties due to significant speech, language, and/or cognitive impairments). This program is managed by the Special Education Department and supported by the Assistive Technology and Augmentative and Alternative Communication (ATAAC) Department.

### Goals of the classroom:

- Develop competence using communication systems as tools for classroom participation
- Provide a range of systems and strategies to meet the individual needs of the students in the classroom
- Empower student to interact with others at school, home and in the community
- Provide access to a modified curriculum based on the state standards using AAC/AT as tools to actively participate and learn.

### What is Augmentative Alternative Communication (AAC)?

Augmentative Alternative Communication (AAC) is a system or strategy that augments or compensates for an individual's inability to communicate effectively. AAC is best thought of as a system, an integrated group of components, including symbols, aids, strategies, and techniques used by individuals to enhance communication. These four critical components are a part of all AAC interventions.

### Who Needs Augmentative Communication?

- Anyone who is not able to communicate effectively with speech and writing
- Anyone who is partially able to communicate with speech (has speech but is not understood by most listeners)
- Anyone who is having difficulty understanding and using oral language.

### Pre-Screening Guidelines

This program is most appropriate for students who:

- Exhibit a significant discrepancy between language understanding and ability to express themselves verbally
- Display complex communication needs resulting from a qualifying diagnosis which necessitates a Speech Generating Device
- Demonstrate functional hearing skills
- Demonstrate communicative intent
- Require AT/AAC supports to access the general education curriculum
- Have a current comprehensive speech, language and communication assessment (within one year)
- And whose parents/guardians participate as part of the TRAIL team by
  - Observing class before the placement IEP
  - Attending two training opportunities during the school year, and
  - Collaborating with other team members to support their student's communication

### TRAIL Classroom expectations

Once in the program, students work toward the following:

- Students can sustain an activity at an age-appropriate level

- Students accept and comply with classroom rules
- Students are active participants during instructional and interactive activities in the classroom
- Students interact with instructional materials using the aided system as the tool in small and large group instruction
- Students are beginning to initiate using systems/tools made available to student when a response is not solicited
- Students demonstrate the ability to benefit from specialized AAC/AT support provided by the TRAIL program to maintain the specialized academic focus
- Parents support and maintain the AAC systems in the home environment

### **Process for referral in the TRAIL program**

1. Student referral can be initiated by any IEP team member
2. The student's current Program Specialist is consulted, who will then consult with the ATAAC Department
3. If the Program Specialist and ATAAC Department are in agreement that the program could be appropriate for the student, the case manager contacts parent to inform them about the TRAIL program and to determine if they would be receptive to a change in placement.  
If so,
4. The Case manager takes the lead in completing the TRAIL Classroom Information packet and sends it to the TRAIL team (c/o Alice du Frane at Ygnacio Valley High School) for TRAIL Team file review:
  - TRAIL Referral Form
  - Most recent triennial IEP, including psychoeducational evaluation
  - Current IEP, including goals and all reports
  - Current progress reports for all IEP goals
  - Current speech and language or AAC evaluation (if applicable)
  - Most recent vision and hearing test
  - Occupational therapy or physical therapy reports
  - Additional medical reports, as applicable
5. If the TRAIL team determines that the program would be appropriate for the student, schedule a parent observation of the TRAIL class their child would be joining
6. Schedule an IEP (if parent and team are in agreement of the change of placement)

### **TRAIL Exit Criteria**

This program is intended to serve students for a limited amount of time (1-2 years), increasing their communication skills so that they can return to a less restrictive environment. They will leave the program for one of the following reasons:

- The student no longer needs the supports provided by the TRAIL program and would currently benefit from a less restrictive environment
- The student would be better served in an alternate placement
- Student graduates from their current campus (they are not automatically enrolled in the next level TRAIL class)