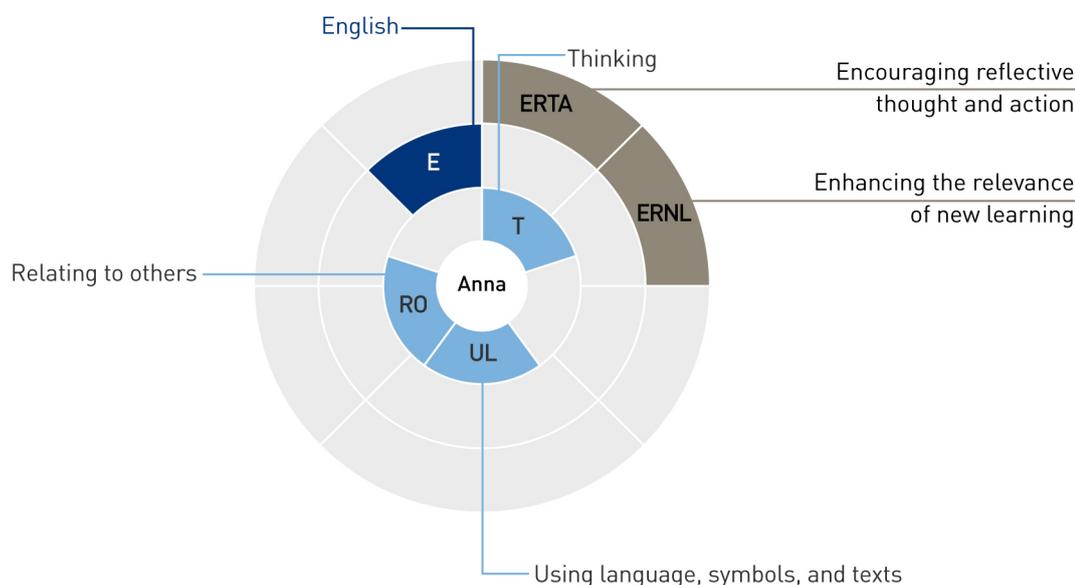


Anna "Sings"

Links to the curriculum



Student background

Name	Anna
Age	9
School	Primary

Anna has a global developmental disorder. The special school she attends receives ongoing and reviewable resourcing schemes (ORRS) funding to enable close supervision as Anna has pica behaviour and tends to mouth or swallow things.

Anna vocalizes some sounds and tunes into music. Her wide repertoire of songs is vocalised with the vowel "a". Anna sings on her own initiative or in response to songs she has heard. Songs are simple and repeated in different settings to enable her to understand, participate, and communicate her needs.

Five learning stories

- 1. Morning Tea** Term 4, 2006
- 2. Breakfast at school** 2 April 2007
- 3. Reading** 4 September 2007
- 4. Lunch** 23 November 2007
- 5. Singing** 29 November 2007

This string of learning stories shows Anna communicating her needs clearly at appropriate times in ways that capitalise on her musical strengths. This communication breakthrough for Anna is strengthening her ability to relate to others.

Morning Tea

Student	Anna	Date	Term 4, 2006
		Observers	Anne (teacher aide) Meeling (teacher)

Today, Anna came to sit at the table as usual to have her morning tea. I started off by singing the song, "I'm so hungry". When I had finished, to our great surprise, Anna hummed the song twice. What a great moment it was to hear Anna hum the tune so beautifully. I responded immediately and gave her something to eat.

Well done Anna!

Footnote: On 14 August 2007, Anna vocalised the "hungry" song in response to Anne's sign and verbal cue whilst travelling back to school in a van at lunch time. We all clapped our hands in delight.

Analysis – what learning is happening here?

We have been trying to teach Anna to hum this tune when she is hungry. This is especially important when there is no object of reference around, like when we are in the van. Hopefully, Anna will hum this tune when we are in the van with her or on an outing. That will really be a wonderful way of communicating to us her need for something to eat.

Links to individual education programme

Anna is learning to associate the lunch song in order to indicate she is ready to eat. She has learnt the tune to a level of accuracy which we can understand.

Key competencies

Using language, symbols, and texts

– I can tell you what I think/need/feel.

Thinking

– I can use what I already know.

Where to next?

Scaffold

Anna needs to have the song modelled for her regularly so that her learning can be extended to include the whole song. She needs to learn to vocalise the song by imitating us. She can then use it to let us know she is hungry.

Breakfast at school

Student	Anna	Date	2 April 2007
		Observers	Anne (teacher aide) Susan (Anna's Mum)

This morning Anna came into the room with her Mum. She took the carton of milk and gave it to me to indicate her need for a drink. She got the lunch bag out, too, but she was grizzling at the same time.

One of the teaching strategies is that when Anna grizzles for food we sing the lunchtime song to her. Anna has to be quiet before we can give her the prompt for something to eat. So I sang the song, "I am so hungry" to Anna. Anna kept quiet and listened attentively, after which she sang it back to us so beautifully.

Susan was really impressed and I was delighted that Anna is slowly learning that she needs to sing the song and not grizzle in order for her to indicate her need to eat. Susan said she did not think Anna could vocalise such a complicated song as the one we taught her.

Excellent singing Anna!

Analysis – what learning is happening here?

Links to individual education programme

Specific learning outcome 2: Learn to respond to the song, "I'm so hungry..."

Key competencies

Using language, symbols, and texts

- I can tell you what I think/need/feel.
- I can listen to others.

Learning areas

Level 1 English: Listening, Reading, and Viewing: language features

- Begins to recognise the oral, written, and visual language features can be used for effect.

Anna has learnt that she will be given something to eat when she vocalises tunefully instead of grizzling to express her need - she read the situation well. Although it was a difficult song, as indicated by her mother, it was not a problem for Anna.

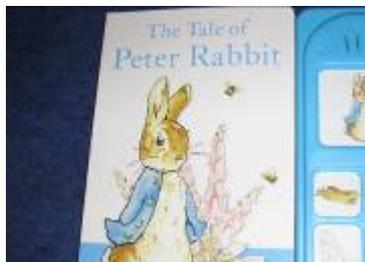
Where to next?

Celebrate and consolidate

Anna will be given opportunities to sing this song as often as possible to request food. All staff will consistently apply the teaching strategy as set in her IEP. More songs will be added as she masters this one so that Anna can relate to others in ways that are more appropriate and can be better understood.

Reading

Student	Anna	Date	4 September 2007
		Observers	Anne (teacher aide) Meeling (teacher)



We often use "The Tale of Peter Rabbit" for reading. On the front cover of the book is a touch pad, which Anna can press to hear different words or expressions from the story.

Today, Anna pressed on the picture with vegetables. When she heard the words, "I am hungry", Anna immediately responded by singing the lunch song, "I'm so hungry".

Excellent association!

Analysis – what learning is happening here?

Links to individual education programme

- Respond consistently to familiar people, events and objects.

Key competencies

Using language, symbols, and texts

- I can tell you what I think/need/feel.

Learning areas

Level 1 English: Listening, Reading, and Viewing: processes and strategies

- Uses processing and some comprehension strategies with some confidence.

Anna can associate the words "I am hungry" with the song "I'm so hungry" making that connection shows her thinking skills. She uses prior learning to express her understanding of the new phrase, which has the same words but is phrased differently.

Where to next?

Increase complexity

We can further Anna's ability to make connection with other words, actions, and/or songs. Some possibilities are "walk", "stop" and "wait". Linking these words and routine events or activities will continue to be a key in her learning.

Lunch

Student	Anna	Date	23 November 2007
		Observers	Sara (classroom release teacher) Meeling (teacher)

Today, while I was doing lunch duty, Anna came and sat next to me and touched her plate. I prompted her to sing "I'm so hungry" and she obliged immediately. The last time I did lunch duty, she would not sing it for me!

After she had eaten, Anna looked at me and I told her if she wanted a drink, she could sing the "Drink" song. I cued her by singing the first bar. Anna continued the tune and was given her drink.

Anna started learning the "Drink" song in May 2007, with various staff modelling the tune for her by singing to her before drinks were offered.

Well done Anna!

Analysis – what learning is happening here?

Links to individual education programme goal

- Anna can respond by singing the song, "I'm so hungry".

Key competencies

Using language, symbols, and texts

- I can tell you what I think/need/feel.

Thinking

- I can use what I already know.

Relating to others

- I can accept others who are new to me.
- I can express myself to different people.
- I can transfer what I learnt to unfamiliar people.

Learning areas

Level 1 English: Listening, Reading, and Viewing: processes and strategies

- Uses processing and some comprehension strategies with some confidence.

Level 1 English: Speaking, Writing, and Presenting: language features

- Uses some oral, written, and visual language features to create meaning and effect.

As I do not see Anna very often, she does not always respond to my prompts. So it was really cool that she responded so well this time. Anna used her singing request songs to tell me her needs.

Anna is beginning to know that songs function to get something for her.

Where to next?

Celebrate and consolidate

We always have an expectation that Anna will respond and will continue to prompt her and expect her to communicate her needs while I am on duty with her.

Anna can be expected to sing to all new, or less familiar staff, when she wants her food and drink.

Singing

Student	Anna	Date	29 November 2007
		Observer	Donna (relief teacher aide)

When I first started working with Anna, she refused to sing any of the "I'm so hungry" song to me to ask for her lunch. Over the last few weeks, however, Anna has been much happier doing it. In response to her efforts, I started singing some new little tunes to her, which elicited some big smiles.

Anna has progressed from just responding consistently to familiar staff to being able to do this with our new reliever teacher aide, Donna.

Analysis – what learning is happening here?

Links to individual education programme goal

— Anna can respond by singing the song "I'm so hungry".

Anna has learnt to apply what she knows in order to communicate her needs to a relieving teacher aide. She showed she could sing a specific song to express herself accurately in this setting.

Key competencies

Participating and contributing

— I can try new things.

Thinking

— I can use what I already know.

Using language, symbols, and texts

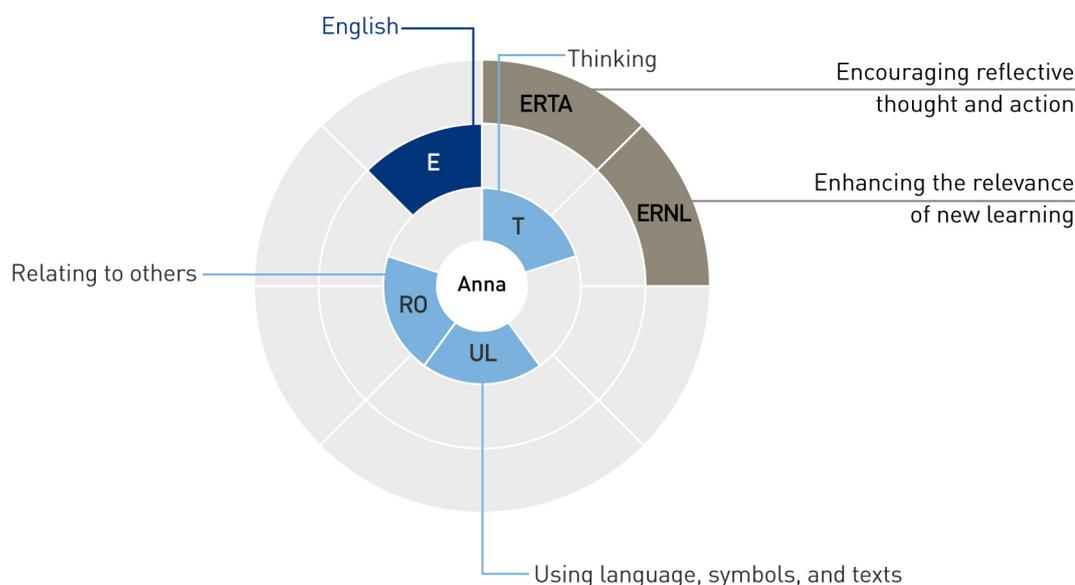
— I can tell you what I think/need/feel.

Where to next?

Increase complexity

Whenever possible, Anna will be introduced to new staff and new songs. Songs can be used for enjoyment, specific instructions, or to convey upcoming events. These can include going to the toilet, going for a walk, out in the van, going home, etc.

Reflection – what these stories exemplify



Key competencies

Anna can express her needs orally (using language, symbols, and texts) by vocalising a tune she has learnt. She consistently sings that tune in association with being hungry (thinking). Her ability to use that tune to get others to meet her needs is evident (relating to others).

How might these stories strengthen Anna's identity as a learner?

Anna has made this song part of her communication (agency) by vocalising the same tune to express her hunger. She has been doing this since Term 4, 2006 (continuity). Most of the observations were in the school setting with occasional ones while she travelled in the van (breadth). Her skill has been maintained with a range of staff at school, and is extending to other needs, such as thirst (depth).

For more information on the four dimensions of agency, breadth, continuity, and depth (ABCDs), refer to *Narrative assessment: a guide for teachers*.

Learning areas

Level 1 English

Anna's learning is situated in the Listening, Reading, and Viewing and Speaking, Writing, and Presenting strands of English. Anna successfully understands and uses song to communicate a need.

Effective pedagogy

What does this tell us about teaching and learning in this setting?

Consistency and routine are critical to Anna's learning. Because all staff have the same expectations and deliver her adapted curriculum faithfully, Anna has been able to show that she has understood her learning (enhancing the relevance of new learning) by vocalising the same song to express her need. She knows that only by communicating appropriately (encouraging reflective thought) will she get the desired response from staff.

Reflective questions for the reader

"How do we find out about the variety of communication strategies for students like Anna?"

"Why is it important to help students learn appropriate ways of communication?"

"How can we take advantage of opportunities for teaching and learning that occur outside of the classroom setting?"

"How can we use the student's interest to foster further learning in other settings and curriculum areas?"

Useful resources

Butterfield, N., Arthur, M., & Sigafos, J. (c1995). *Partners in everyday communicative exchanges: a guide to promoting interaction involving people with severe intellectual disability*. Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes Pub. Co.

Downing, J. E. (c2005). *Teaching communication skills to students with severe disabilities*. Baltimore, Md.: Paul H. Brookes Pub. Co.

McCormick, L., Loeb, D. F., & Schiefbusch, R. L. (c2003). *Supporting children with communication difficulties in inclusive settings: school-based language intervention*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.