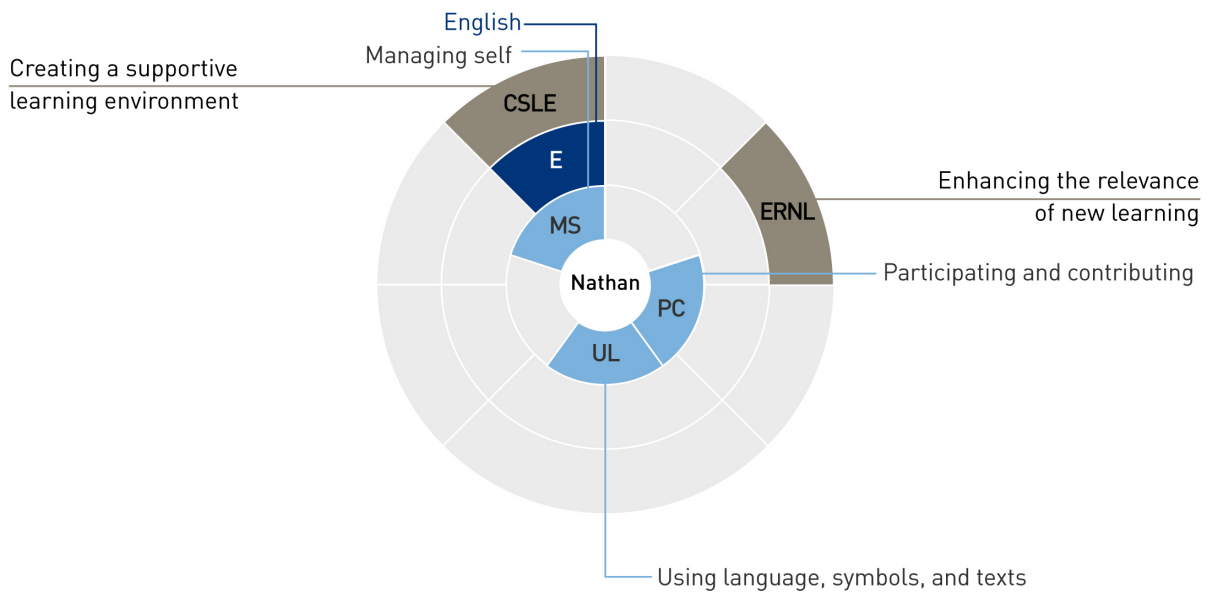


# Nathan the speaker

## Links to the curriculum



## Student background

<b>Name</b>	Nathan	Nathan lives in a small, rural community and has been at school for almost a year. Nathan attends school three half-days and two full days. From term 3, 2008, Nathan will attend school full time.
<b>Age</b>	5	
<b>Year</b>	1	
<b>School</b>	Primary	

Nathan is demonstrating a passion for literacy. He loves being read to and spends a lot of time browsing through books. He spells many words with his magnetic letters.

There has been significant growth of Nathan’s literacy capabilities, especially in understanding of text, sharing excitement with text, and communicating with text. Nathan has autism and is essentially “non-verbal” except for the use of, “ah ha” with different intonations to communicate intent.

Nathan communicates using the Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS) and Makaton Sign Language (Makaton). The school education team is in the process of assessing communication devices to enable Nathan to communicate with others in and out of the classroom.

## Four learning stories

1. **Verbalising initial phoneme** 18 March 2008
2. **Verbalising a morning greeting** 23 May 2008
3. **Nathan uses language in the classroom** June 2008
4. **Nathan responds spontaneously** September 2008

This string of learning stories, collected over three terms, shows Nathan participating and contributing in a variety of ways, with growing confidence and motivation as a communicator.

## Verbalising initial phoneme

<b>Student</b>	Nathan	<b>Date</b>	18 March 2008
		<b>Observer</b>	Mary (teacher)

### Intended learning

- Nathan will verbalise the beginning sounds of words with the teacher and class peers during class phonics sessions.

Nathan uses “ah ha” in reply to morning greetings and often repeats this phrase while participating in physical activity outside.

Nathan’s class has been learning to associate phonemes with picture cards and letters. They also write the letter on each other’s back, on the floor, on whiteboards, and occasionally outside.



With Debbie’s (teacher aide) support, Nathan has participated in these sessions since the beginning of the year. He would sit quietly while the children made the sounds of the letters. With hand-over-hand support he would trace the letters like the other children.

However, today, for the very first time, Nathan vocalised the letter sound “b” with the children as the picture cards were held up. He then went on to attempt some other sounds when prompted by Debbie.

The photo shows Nathan participating in the phonics sessions.

### Analysis – what learning is happening here?

#### Key competencies

##### Participating and contributing, Using language, symbols, and texts

This story is an example of Nathan participating and contributing in a group session alongside his classmates. It also demonstrates that Nathan is using language, symbols, and texts by making the initial sound of the objects shown in the pictures.

#### Learning areas

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

Nathan is beginning to use sounds to create meaning.

#### Where to next?

Nathan’s next step is to make more than the initial sound; for example, to say, “a”, “apple”. Nathan will be encouraged to verbalise the whole name of the object, as well as the initial sounds with the class.

## Verbalising a morning greeting

<b>Student</b>	Nathan	<b>Date</b>	23 May 2008
		<b>Observer</b>	Mary (teacher)

### Intended learning

- Nathan will verbalise, “h” for “hi” as a response to a morning greeting from his teacher and class peers.

Every day the children greet the teacher during the morning roll check. They respond in a variety of languages but mostly English and Māori. There are two Nathans in the class. Nathan has recognised his place on the roll and waits until his name is called to respond. Nathan would respond with, “ah ha”. In the regular class phonics sessions over the past few weeks Nathan has begun responding with the various initial sounds we are studying. These responses from him suggest he is perhaps ready to move beyond the all purpose “ah ha”.



Nathan was able to say, “k” in response to “Kia ora”. ([Click here](#) to view the video clip online)

After the morning roll is taken, the children in the class often turn to one another and ask, “Kei te pēhea koe?” (How are you?) They respond to each other, “Kei te pai!” (Good).

Today the teacher aide prompted Nathan “Say, “Kei te pai.” Nathan replied, “K k k.”

**Footnote 5 June 2008:** Nathan is now saying the word, “Hi!” as another response to the morning greeting.

**Footnote 2009:** Nathan's Mum, Bridget captured this [video clip](#) showing how much Nathan's oral language has progressed in a year.

## Analysis – what learning is happening here?

### Key competencies

#### **Participating, and contributing, Using language, symbols and texts, Managing self**

This is Nathan managing himself as a learner, participating, and contributing, and using language by responding to morning greetings from his teacher and peers.

### Learning areas

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

Nathan is beginning to use initial sounds to create meaning as he communicates with his peers and participates in familiar and regular classroom routines.

### Where to next?

Nathan's next step is to verbalise the whole word or phrase when responding to morning greetings from his teacher or peers. He will be encouraged to verbalise greetings and farewells whenever appropriate.

## Nathan uses language in the classroom

<b>Student</b>	Nathan	<b>Date</b>	June 2008
		<b>Observer</b>	Mary (teacher)

### Intended learning

- Nathan will begin to use language in the classroom and respond to people with fewer prompts.

For the past few weeks, Nathan has been saying, "Hi" in response to greetings. Until recently, when people say "bye", Nathan would give eye contact and a wave with his hand. Several days ago when prompted, Nathan said, "Bye" as well as gave a wave.

During mathematics maintenance, I ask children to choose what number we should count from and what number we should count up to. A child chose to start counting from 20. I then asked, "What number should we count up to today?" Nathan called out the word, "hund." I asked Nathan if he would like us to count to 100. He responded, "Yes" clearly and without further prompting.



The next day, while reading through the months of the year, Nathan said, "April" and then pointed to the month April on the wall chart.

Yesterday, Nathan was out in the cloak bay trying to put his reading folder away. When he had been gone for a while, the teacher aide went to see what was keeping him. The folder had caught. Nathan was standing beside his bag saying, "Help, help."

### Analysis – what learning is happening here?

#### Key competencies

##### **Participating and contributing, Using language, symbols and texts, Managing self**

It's fantastic to see Nathan clearly having a go at using his voice in the classroom.

These are just some examples of Nathan managing himself as a learner, participating, and contributing, and using language by responding to questions from his teacher and asking for help from his teacher aide.

#### Learning areas

##### **Level 1 English: Speaking, Writing, and Presenting: purposes and audiences**

Nathan is continuing to develop his awareness of audience as he communicates socially and participates in familiar and regular classroom routines.

#### Where to next?

Nathan's next step is to continue to verbalise responses whenever appropriate. As Nathan builds a bank of words that he readily uses, we will encourage him to begin stringing them together in phrases and sentences; for example, "Bye Mum" instead of just, "Bye" or "Can you help me?" He will need to be given the language models to use; for example, "Nathan, say, "Can you help me with my bag?""

## Nathan responds spontaneously

<b>Student</b>	Nathan	<b>Date</b>	September 2008
		<b>Observer</b>	Mary (teacher)

### Intended learning

- Nathan will begin to communicate in the classroom setting.

Over the past term, Nathan has demonstrated a willingness to use words more and more in the classroom setting, including counting with the children during mathematics maintenance and joining in the number game, "Buzz". Most of his communication involves one-word utterances, for example, when using PECS to show his news, he says "shopping". With prompting, "You need to say "I went shopping"", he will repeat, "I went shopping". He does not initiate communication but will reply to greetings, farewells, "yes-", and "no-" type questions with verbal prompts such as, "Look at the person. Nathan, you need to say "hello"". I have also noticed that he will echo prompts or instructions from the teacher, such as "books away". This morning, after reading, he spoke a sentence communicating intention, unprompted. Nathan had finished instructional reading with me on the mat. After reading, the children put their books into their reading folders and store them in their school bags ready to take home to read that night. Nathan knows this routine well and executes it with little prompting.



The children then move to independent reading activities, such as the computer, the listening post, the writing table, and library reading. Today, Nathan stood up, leaving his reading folder on the mat and moved across the room to look at what the children were doing on the computer. I followed him and said, "Stop, Nathan (with my hand up to get his attention). Look. Books in bags". He took the reading folder from me saying, "I'll be back" and hurried to put his books away. This response was unprompted.

## Analysis – what learning is happening here?

### Key competencies

#### Using language, symbols, and texts, Managing self

This is the first time in the classroom that Nathan has responded to an instruction using more than one word. He was confident enough to share his intention, which was to return to the computer after putting his books away. Nathan is managing himself as a learner and shows an awareness of the effects of his words. He is relating to others by interacting confidently with the teacher.

### Learning areas

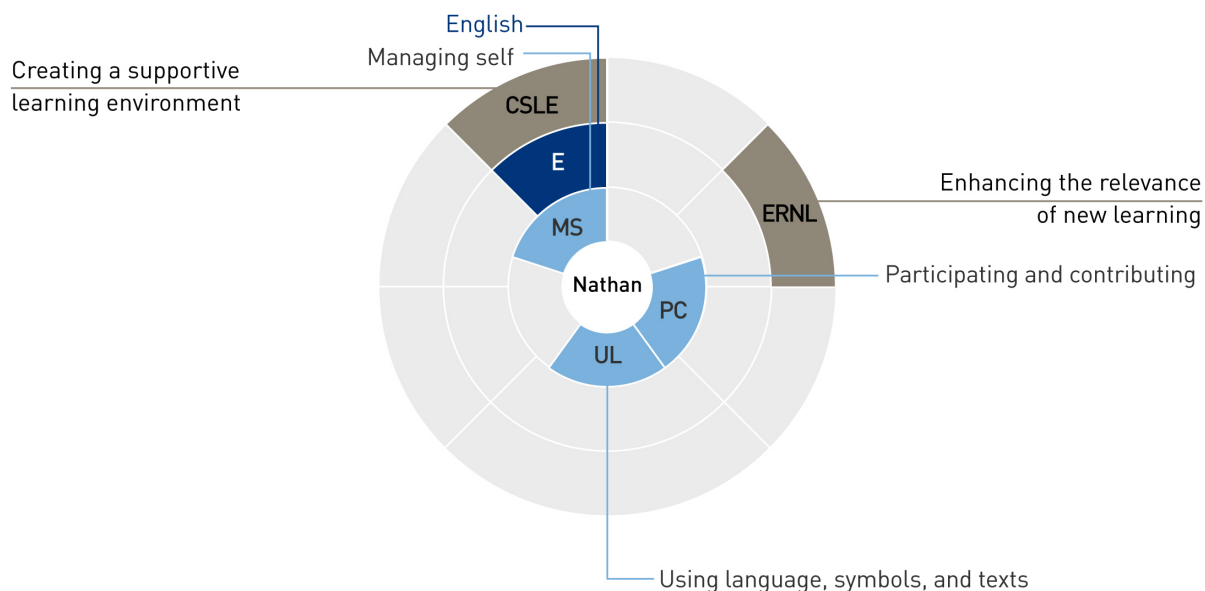
#### Level 1 English: Speaking, Writing, and Presenting: purposes and audiences

Nathan demonstrated he can string words together to communicate an idea or convey a message. His speech was clear and his message was intentional. Nathan is increasing his understanding of language being a two-way communication as a way of telling others what he wants to do.

## Where to next?

We will keep talking to Nathan with an expectation that he can respond in common phrases of his own choosing rather than echolalia. Nathan's peers will be encouraged to speak to him as they would to each other and to give him time to respond.

## Reflection – what these stories exemplify



## Key competencies

These stories show Nathan participating and contributing in classroom learning. The stories give examples of Nathan responding as a group member. They also demonstrate Nathan managing himself in the learning sessions. He is meeting new challenges and acts appropriately in the learning.

In all the learning stories, Nathan is demonstrating a willingness to begin to interact with a range of people in a number of contexts (using language, symbols and texts).

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

The string of stories describes Nathan's growing confidence about communicating in routine classroom activities and his motivation to be an active participator and contributor (agency and breadth).

The stories span several months during which time Nathan moves from replying, "ah ha" to morning greetings to saying, "hi" and stringing words together. Nathan is communicating more frequently, more competently, and with a wider audience (continuity and 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

This learning is in the Speaking, Writing, and Presenting strand. Nathan is developing his ability to use oral language to reply to greetings and questions, and to express his needs and intent. His communication is developing from one word utterances to stringing several words together.

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

Nathan feels accepted and secure in his class and with his peers. His teacher (Mary) and teacher aide (Debbie) make sure he is included and that his learning needs are catered for in a supportive learning environment. The teacher and class members support each other's learning with familiar and consistent routines, along with visual and verbal prompts.

Mary and Debbie encourage Nathan to take part in all class activities. Nathan is able to integrate new learning into what he already understands and to make connections across all learning areas. This is helped by the integrated nature of his classroom programme.

Many opportunities are given for Nathan to engage with, and enhance the relevance of, his new learning. The activities described in the learning stories show a variety of learning opportunities, including the regular and the familiar.

### Reflective question for the reader

"In what other ways do you encourage the opportunity for communication amongst your students?"

### Useful resources

Butterfield, N., Arthur, M., & Sigafoos, 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.

Ministry of Education. (2000). *Inclusive assessment*. Wellington: Learning Media.

Ministry of Education. (2003). *Effective literacy practice in years 1 to 4*. Wellington: Learning Media.

Ministry of Education. (2008). *The English Language Learning Progressions: a resource for mainstream and ESOL teachers*. Wellington: Learning Media.

Ministry of Education. (to be published in 2009). *Oral language in years 1 to 3*. Wellington: Learning Media.

Quill, K. A. (c2000). *Do-watch-listen-say: social and communication intervention for children with autism*. Baltimore, Md.: Paul H. Brookes Pub.

Janney, R., & Snell, M. E. (c2006). *Social relationships and peer support* [Part of the set *Teachers' guides to inclusive practices*] (2nd ed.). Baltimore, Md.: Paul H. Brookes Pub. Co.