

The CONNECT Framework® Matrix

A Whole Child, Whole Life Approach

The CONNECT Framework® Matrix helps us bring the seven key principles of CONNECT to life across the many areas that influence a child's ability to communicate.






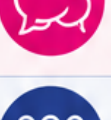

It reminds us that communication doesn't happen in isolation—it grows from connection, regulation, and everyday experiences across all areas of life.



When we take a whole child, whole life approach, we create the conditions for communication to thrive.

The CONNECT Principles

- C** ▶ Connection First
- O** ▶ Observe and Adapt
- N** ▶ Natural Routines
- N** ▶ Neurodiversity-Affirming Practice
- E** ▶ Empowered Caregivers
- C** ▶ Communication as an Outcome of Regulation
- T** ▶ Togetherness

CONNECT Element	Prompting Questions	Notes
 C – Connection First	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> When does this child appear most comfortable and connected with adults? What activities naturally create shared engagement? What helps them feel safe before demands are placed? 	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
 O – Observe and Adapt	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What patterns do we notice before dysregulation? What early signs show their regulation is dropping? How might we adapt the environment, expectations, or communication? 	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
 N – Natural Routines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Which parts of the school day are most successful for this child? Where do we see communication happening naturally? Which transitions or routines are most difficult? 	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
 N – Neurodiversity-Affirming Practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What sensory or environmental factors affect this child? What strengths, interests, or motivations support engagement? How can we support this child without forcing compliance? 	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
 E – Empowered Caregivers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What strategies currently help staff support this child? What adult responses seem to reduce escalation? What support or shared language might staff need? 	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
 C – Communication as an Outcome of Regulation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What does this child look like when regulated and ready to communicate? What does dysregulation look like for them? What helps restore capacity for communication? 	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
 T – Togetherness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What shared understanding do staff have about this child? What responses should be consistent across adults? What key strategies should everyone use? 	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>



Key CONNECT Principle

Regulation → Connection → Communication → Learning

Communication is not something we demand from a dysregulated nervous system. It is something that emerges when the body feels safe enough to connect.



About the Author

Susannah Burden
BSc (Hons), PgDip AVT, LSLs Cert AVT
Specialist Speech & Language Therapist & Auditory Verbal Therapist

Author of:
CONNECT First: Helping Children and Young People Thrive Through Real-Life Communication

Find CONNECT FIRST



Learn more at www.connectcommunicationtherapy.com



Find the book online at Amazon, Waterstones, Barnes & Noble, and your local bookstore.

How to Use the Matrix

- Reflect on each area of life.
- Notice strengths and areas for support.
- Consider how each CONNECT principle can guide your next steps.
- Use it to plan, review and collaborate with families and teams.

