



Teaching Your Child to Communicate

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Today's Goals

- Supporting Communication Naturally
- Using Assistive Technology
- Reinforcing Your Child's Communication



Who Is this Information for?

Learners with Emergent Communication Skills

Could mean:

- No verbalizations
- Limited verbal communications
- Rely on 1-2 word sentences, or rote sentences, " I want____."
- Have echoic language, but minimal functional language
- Limited success across communication modalities



Children must be MOTIVATED to learn to communicate



Following the Child's Lead

- Typical Adult-child interactions
 - Adult-directed
 - Child-control
 - Adult-monitored

Following the child's lead = sharing control

- Use the child's interests and preferences to guide activities
- An engaging environment will assist in keeping the child interested
- If the child appears disinterested or requests a change in activities- do so whenever possible!
 - This teaches valuable language



Following the Child's Lead

- Be aware, at times it is not appropriate or not possible to follow the child's lead
- The child should not be allowed to engage in an activity that is hazardous (aggression, self-injury) or unacceptable
- In these circumstances the implementer must assume control until the child is able to assume appropriate control



Arranging the Environment: Identifying Context

- Consider your daily schedule and identify times that naturally fit for interactions between you and the child to target social and communication skills:
 - Play
 - Free/unstructured times
 - Routines with interaction (meals, bath)
- Think about other times/activities you could expand the use of strategies to others (siblings, peers, other adults)



Arranging the Environment

- Environment needs to be motivating
 - Balance between routine and some novelty
- Materials are chosen based on child's interests and skills targeted:
 - Multiple parts or ways to play
 - Can be added to other activities
 - Requires assistance to operate
- Adult, sibling, or peer is the "Gatekeeper" of materials
 - Strategies are then used to elicit student communication



Supporting Communication

Multi-Tiered Approach in which the adults working with the child:

1. Use meaningful language when talking to the child
2. Set up "communication temptations" to elicit communication
3. Reinforce all communication and attempts!



What We Say Matters!

Language should be **meaningful** and **consistent**

- Match language to the individual's receptive language level (higher expressive than receptive)
- Don't just say what to do, say why to do it
- Do not ask "are you ready?" if it's not a choice
- Refrain from repeating directions



Refrain From Repeating Directions

1. Give opportunity to respond
2. If does not respond, or responds incorrectly – Give corrective feedback
3. Repeat the request/opportunity to respond and prompt to ensure a correct response
4. Provide praise
5. When applicable (as often as possible) provide an opportunity for the individual to independently respond



Gain Attention

We want to do this in the least intrusive way possible:

- | | |
|--------------------|--|
| Least
Intrusive | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pause activity • Position object or self in line of sight • Make an expectant noise • Tap shoulder • Physically interrupt line of sight • Say "look" • Call name |
| ↓ | |
| Most
Intrusive | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regain control of object prior to statement |



Support Natural Development of Descriptive Language

- Multiple components, draws awareness to and work towards response to more units within the environment
 - Color, shape, size, texture, quantity, quality, speed, position
- Examples (descriptor + object):
 - Colors: red pen, v. blue crayon
 - Size: big bubble v. little bubble
 - Speed: fast car v. slow car
- Embed into play activities/daily routine
- Stages:
 1. Adult labeling the environment
 2. Work toward receptively responding (first without distractors, then with distractors)
 3. Encourage child's expressive use of cues



Eliciting Communication

- Strategies:
 - Withhold materials (Refrain from saying: "What do you need?")
 - Offer a small amount to get them to request "more" of the item
 - Give some parts of the materials, but not all
 - Sabotage the routine
 - Teach how to appropriately protest



Prompting to Elicit Communication

Consider balance between supporting child success and over-prompting

Least Invasive

- Time delay
- Position object or self in line of sight
- Gesture
- Phonetic cue
- Ask question
- Use carrier phrase ("Ready, set,....")
- Modeling the correct word or phrase

Most Invasive



Augmentative & Alternative Communication (AAC)

Speech vs. Communication:

Prioritize Communication!!!!

- For children with limited verbal abilities- Consider AT as your child's skills develop
- Start AAC EARLY
- It's NEVER too late to introduce AAC
- Consider needs across environments/tasks and plan for needs for each part of the day
 - Request, question, comment, social



Assistive Technology Evaluations

- Mizou Therapy Services-Children's Therapy Center (Mid-MO Area)
 - 573-884-2642
 - <http://www.muhealth.org/services/therapy/assistive-technology/>
- Easter Seals Midwest (Mid-Mo Area)
 - (314) 432-6200
- St. Louis Children's Hospital (St. Louis Area)
 - (314) 454-6154
- Ability KC (Kansas City Area)
 - (816) 751-7900
- TheraCare (Southwest MO Area)
 - (417) 890-4656

**All Medicaid Approved Evaluation Centers*



Contingent Response to Behavior

Reinforcement **MUST** be contingent upon the correct behavior or attempt

The response must be:

1. As immediate as possible after the child's response
 - Ideally, reinforce within 3 seconds
2. Appropriate to the response
 - Never reinforce an incorrect response
3. Dependent upon the response
 - Reinforce **ALL** correct responses or attempts!



Building Upon Communication Attempts

- Reinforce **ALL** attempts to initiate and to respond to questions or instructions
- Must be a “reasonable attempt”
 - Child’s attention is directed to the task
 - The attempt is related to the task
 - Emitted with a reasonable amount of effort (at the child’s level of ability)



Resources

OCALI Autism Internet Modules

<http://www.autisminternetmodules.org/>

National Professional Development Center on ASD- Evidence Based Briefs

<http://autismcdc.fpg.unc.edu/>

Autism Focused Intervention Resources and Modules

<http://afirm.fpg.unc.edu/>

Missouri Autism Guidelines Initiative (MAGI)

<http://autismguidelines.dmh.mo.gov/>



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