

# Communication & Language:

Supporting your child's development with augmentative communication strategies

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MARTHA'S VINEYARD, MAY 17, 2013



## Augmentative Communication Program, Boston Children's Hospital

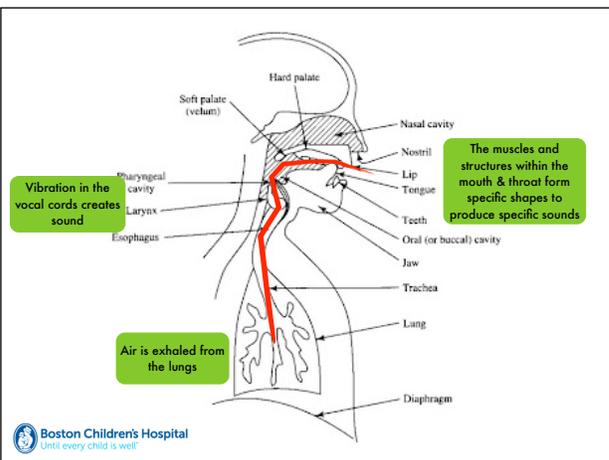
- Evaluation & treatment for children and adults with communication and access challenges.
- Team of 6 speech-language pathologists and 2 occupational therapists.
- Augmentative Communication Program & Autism Language Program

Augmentative  
Communication  
Program



## What is speech?

- Speech is the physical process of sound production.
- It involves the lungs, vocal cords, muscles of the mouth, and the brain.
- Speech sound production requires the cooperation of all systems, in a precise way.



## Why does my child have difficulty speaking?

- Producing speech is a complex process
- Involves multiple systems
- Any disruption in these systems can delay or prevent the production of speech
- Range of developmental stages



## What is language?

- Language is the way that sounds words are structured and combined to communicate.
- Language can be spoken, written, signed, or produced with augmentative communication strategies.

## More on language...

- Receptive: Listening and understanding a message
- Expressive: Producing a message



## Language discrepancy

- Many children with speech and language challenges have **better receptive language skills than expressive** language skills; i.e., they can understand more than they can produce.

## Typical language development

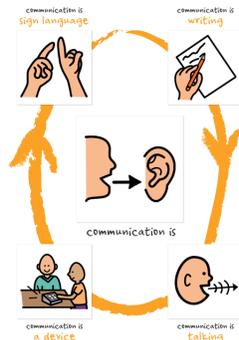
- Sound play and babbling
- Transitions to proto-words and words, 12-18 months
- Word combinations and morphological structures (e.g., plural, past tense), 18-24 months
- Sentences with more complex structure

## Early Communication

- Pre-intentional
- Gradually shaped into intentional communication by caregivers responses
- Responsivity & frequent speech models play a big part in children's language development

## Communication

- Communication is the combination of multiple modes of communication (e.g., speech, facial expression) to convey wants, share ideas, comment, question, and gain information.



## Total Communication

- Teaching and supporting all available modes of communication (speech, signs, pictures, communication devices).
- Providing your child with the most opportunities to communicate in every possible situation

# Purposes of communication

- greet (hello)
- part (bye, see you later)
- redirect/ change (another, different)
- existence (that, look, there)
- affirm (yes, I agree)
- disappearance (away, all gone)
- possession (mine, yours, his)
- nonexistence (not, none)
- comment (like, silly, good, bad)
- describe (tall, fast, cold)
- rejection/negation (stop, no)
- request assistance, information, object, action
- direct (go, get, try, come, help)

# What we know

- **Children learn best:**
  - \* During routines
  - \* When information is provided to multiple senses
  - \* With repetition
  - \* When shown how to do it
  - \* With responsive partners

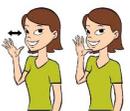


# Manual Signs



# Manual Signs

- Signs have a hand shape, location, and movement
- Types of sign language



# Manual Signs

- Offer visual support for language
- Increase processing time
- Portable, ready to use

# Manual Signs

- Reduce frustration
- Improve communication
- Facilitate speech

# Enhanced gestures

- What if my child has difficulty making the signs correctly?
- Shape gestures that your child is already producing into meaningful, re-usable sign
- Keep communication partners informed

# How to begin

- Select signs to teach your child based on your common routines, high frequency words, and personally relevant words.
- Set realistic goals
- Take videos, pictures, write them down



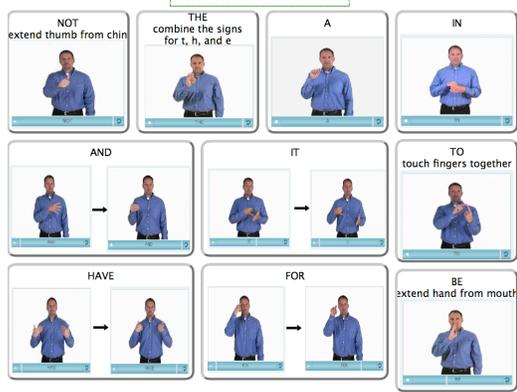
# Teaching signs

- Produce signs for targeted words as you speak
- Draw your child's attention to you as you form the signs
- Move your child's hands to model the targeted signs
- REPETITION, ROUTINES

# Routines

- Why is it beneficial to teach and reinforce signs during routines?
- Routines remove the demand of learning a new task and allow the child to focus only on the communication strategy.
- Routines by definition, occur frequently and predictably, offering many opportunities to practice.

## SIGNS for "LITTLE WORDS"



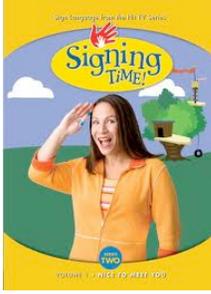
# Sign resources

- [www.signingsavvy.com](http://www.signingsavvy.com)



# Sign resources

- **Signing Times DVD series**



# Sign resources

- <http://www.babysignlanguage.com>

- **Apps**

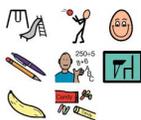


# What we know

- **Children learn best:**
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# Picture Communication Strategies

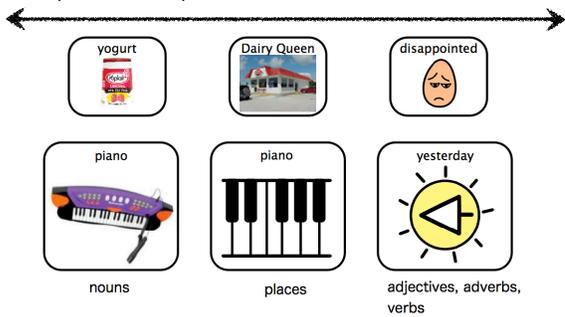


# What?

- Visual representation of language
- Variety of formats and ways to implement
- Can include photographs, line drawings, or symbols
- Varying degrees of “transparency”

# Photographs vs. Symbols

Most clearly resembles the object Most abstract

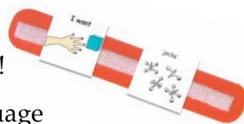


# PECS

- PECS = Picture Exchange Communication System
- Does not = 
- Popular system with 6 defined stages
- System benefits and caveats

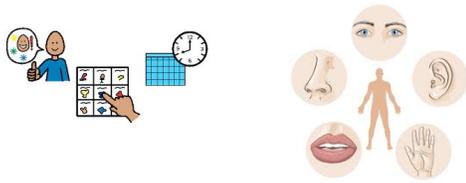
# What?

- Not just making choices!
- Remember typical language development, variety of “functions” for communicating
- Variety of sentence types



# Why?

- Picture communication supports offer an additional mode of input--visual



# What we know

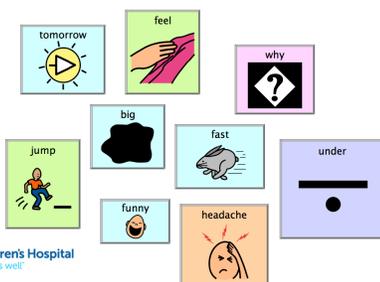
- **Children learn best:**
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# Why?

- They are easily interpreted by communication partners

# Why?

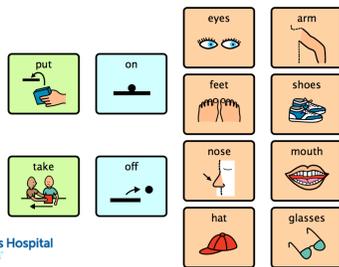
- They can represent a broad range of objects, concepts, and ideas





# Expanding language

- Topic displays: Combining pictures to form short sentences



# Color-coding

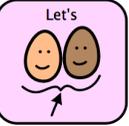
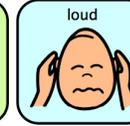
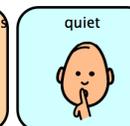
- Color-coding by parts of speech helps children locate symbols faster and can promote sentence building.
- Any color-coding scheme is acceptable, must be consistent
- Fitzgerald Key: Nouns- orange, verbs- green, people/pronouns- yellow, adjectives- blue, social vocabulary- pink

# Topic displays at home

- Select a few parts of the daily routine to expand upon
- Use displays when you speak and encourage your child to use displays to communicate



Bath time

Let's 	sing 	loud 
again 	Wheels on the Bus 	quiet 
Twinkle Twinkle 	Itsy Bitsy 	fast 

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## Using pictures in the environment





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age I want help mine  
not I up that go happ  
st w I u again eat  
me I me like  
le I every come  
go I I make it off  
now re I e thing where  
big busy o I feed in  
make out a I who  
down good I who  
and who fun I who  
after am be I ry I  
fast fun have I ry I  
need talk and I rator

## Core Vocabulary

age I want help mine  
not I up that go happ  
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## The AAC dilemma...

- “How can I possibly include **all** the words he’ll need?”
- “How do I know what vocabulary to teach?”
- “We never seem to have the **right words** available.”

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# Core Vocabulary

- 80-85% of what we say is communicated with only 200 basic words.
- We call this set of words core vocabulary. They are consistent across topic, place, and cognitive ability.
- Examples: *you, that, go, here, what, look, my, eat, put, up, down, take, in, out, help, some, more, want, yes, no, help, finished, again, different, these, away*

# Core vocabulary

“What is the priority in an AAC vocabulary? A small set of consistent and highly predictable core words that occur frequently, and compose 80% of our messages? Or a very large, unpredictable and inconsistent set of fringe words that compose only 20% of our messages? Core words provide the basic architecture of our messages, and fringe words provide the customized detail.”

From <http://www.aaclanguage.com/other/core-vocabulary>

# So why teach core?

- Common words, used often by all
- Can be used flexibly
- When we learn core, focus can shift to learning new information/content
- Ability to talk about a range of topics with a small set of words

# How should we choose what pictures to teach and use first?

- Important to guide decisions for vocabulary based on BOTH immediate needs and life-long language skills.
- Teaching words that can be used repeatedly in many situations offers the best “communicative power”
- Plan for growth

## Common Communication Board



## Common "art" board



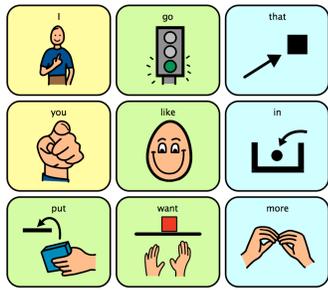
## What's the problem?

- Difficult to combine symbols to create sentences
- Only lends to labeling or requesting
- Heavy use of nouns, lacks other parts of speech

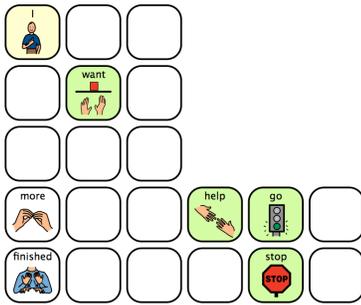
## Opportunities

- Typically developing kids speak in 3-4 word sentences with word endings before the age of 3...we need to give kids who use augmentative communication the same **OPPORTUNITY**.

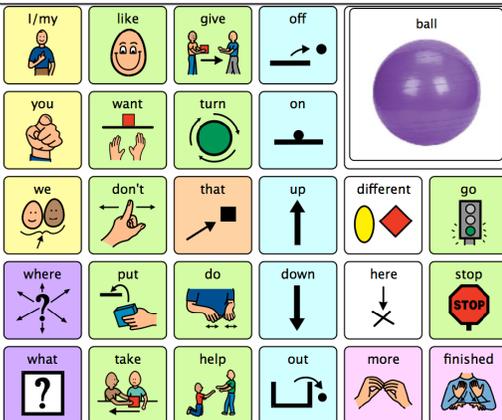
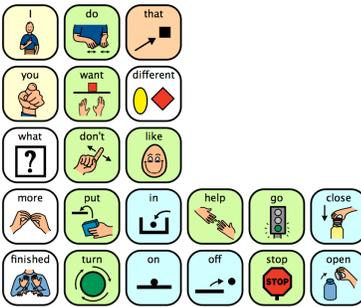
# Basic core board



# Core language



# Core language



Let me tell you a story...

## Narrative development

- Crucial skills for social and language development
- Can be a challenging skills for children with speech and language difficulties
- NOT in the here & now

## Typical narrative language development

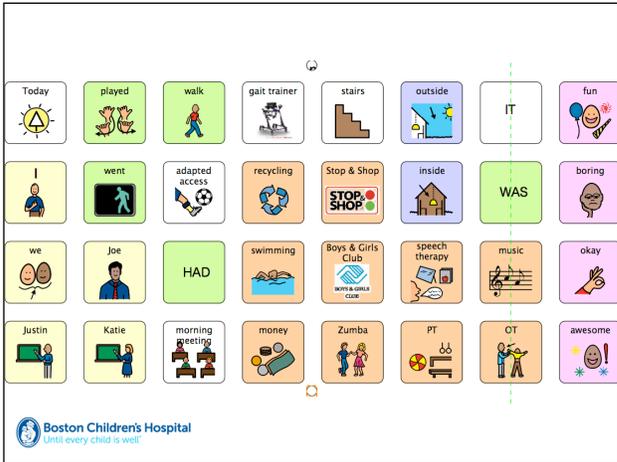
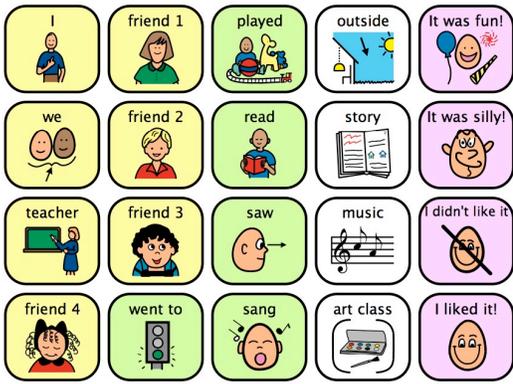
- Beginning around 2 years of age, children share “heaps” of information
- By 3 years, children begin to sequence events together.
- Include person, place, and event

## Narrative development

- How does your child tell you what he did at school?



TODAY AT SCHOOL...



## A photo speaks 1000 words



## Supporting Receptive Language & Behavior



# First/Then displays

FIRST	THEN
eat your dinner 	play outside 

# First/Then displays

First	Then
nap 	

play outside  snack  read a book 

# Consequence boards

- Concretely illustrate the consequence of a desired or non-desired behavior

If I...

stay in my seat 	listen 	talk when it is my turn 
--	---	--

Then I earn:

# Consequence boards

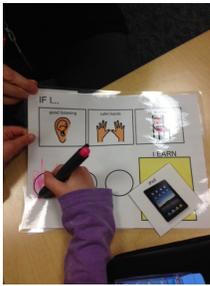
IF I... 	THEN I LOSE... 
--	---

# Token systems

for \_\_\_\_\_ Token Chart



3 😊 =



# Self-advocacy board

Shift the focus to the "solution"



I NEED...



# Visual timer

- Offers a concrete, visual representation of an abstract concept
- Offers control



RESOURCES: picture communication sources

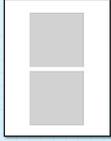
VISUALS ENGINE

# Create Visual Supports for your child

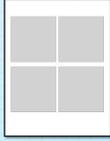
Select a template



1 image/page



2 images/page



4 images/page

Let's get started

The visuals engine will help you build visual supports and sequences for your child.

Steps:

1. Select the template with the size of picture you want.
2. Select a picture to put in the template.
3. Type in the title you will use for that picture.
4. Repeat for more pictures.

Now you are ready to print and use!

- <http://connectability.ca/visuals-engine/>

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# Additional resources

- [www.google.com/images](http://www.google.com/images)
- [www.picsearch.com](http://www.picsearch.com)
- [www.do2learn.com](http://www.do2learn.com)
- [www.lessonpix.com](http://www.lessonpix.com)

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# Communication Partner Skills

## What we know

- **Children learn best:**
  - \* During routines
  - \* When information is provided to multiple senses
  - \* With repetition
  - \* When shown how to do it
  - \* With responsive partners

## Supporting communication

- Caregivers and educational team members' skills in supporting AAC are directly related to better communication outcomes.
- That is, the support we provide matters!

## Supporting communication

- Slow down
- Children with language difficulties benefit from increased (not decreased!) time to process spoken information



## Supporting communication

- Balance conversation turns
- Wait
- Allow the child time and opportunity to respond



## Supporting communication

- Create opportunities
- Avoid anticipating your child's EVERY need (this isn't always contradictory to being a good parent...)
- "When less is more" (Snow)

## Supporting communication

- Limit yes/no questions
- Comment
- Ask open ended questions



## Supporting communication

- Show (model, aided language input)
- Aided language modeling: "Learners get to see/hear the language that they are expected to use which makes it more likely they will 'talk' back in the language that is spoken to them."

From [www.praacticalaac.org](http://www.praacticalaac.org), Carol Zangari

**AAC BOOT CAMP**  
Getting AAC Users COMMUNICATING  
regardless of AAC system used (no tech, low tech, high tech) or skill level...

⊘ DON'T do this.....	👤 DO this.....
● <b>DON'T</b> expect a user to know how to communicate w/o direct models & instruction	✓ <b>MODEL MODEL MODEL</b> model expected communication behaviors BEFORE expecting to see those behaviors from the user
● <b>DON'T</b> do ALL the talking	✓ <b>PRESUME COMPETENCE</b>
● <b>DON'T</b> overprompt	✓ <b>FOLLOW</b> prompt hierarchy
● <b>DON'T</b> teach ONLY requesting	✓ <b>TEACH</b> language functions including directing, commenting, requesting assistance, etc...
● <b>DON'T</b> re-prompt too quickly	✓ <b>WAIT</b> 10-20 sec. (w/an expectant look) before re-prompting! <i>Count in your head!!! 1-2-3</i>
● <b>DON'T</b> provide ONLY nouns	✓ <b>PROVIDE CORE WORDS</b> including verbs & describing words (in addition to nouns)
● <b>DON'T</b> focus on vocabulary that won't be functional/used tomorrow	✓ <b>COLOR CODE</b> parts of speech
● <b>DON'T</b> remove the device	✓ <b>KEEP</b> icon placement constant (keep repeated icons in the same location on each page/screen)
● <b>DON'T</b> move symbols	✓ <b>ALLOW</b> user time to explore and learn the system
● <b>DON'T</b> stop all "babbling" (excluding adult speaking)	✓ <b>MAKE</b> AAC available at all times
● <b>DON'T</b> keep the AAC system in their desk, cubbie, or backpack	✓ <b>PROVIDE</b> Aided Language Input
● <b>DON'T</b> expect sentences right away	✓ <b>ASK</b> open-ended questions

Resource developed by  
Lauren S. Enders,  
Augmentative  
Communication  
Consultant/Assistive  
Technology Consultant,  
from Bucks County, PA.

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## Keeping team members informed

- “Communication Passport

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## Keeping team members informed

- Share medical information
- Use AAC tools and strategies during medical appointments
- Using Drop Box to share pictures, files

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## “If necessity is the mother of invention, then expectation is the mother of success.”

Susan McCloskey, Pennsylvania Technology Center  
(From, Shawn Malcomson “Implementation Strategies for AAC: How to Get Kids Really Talking”

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## Remember...

- Set expectations high
- Provide frequent opportunities
- Plan for growth
- Model
- Motivation is key

## A few of my favorite resources...

## Facebook Groups

- PrAACtical AAC
- Boston Children's Hospital
- Federation for Children with Special Needs
- Easter Seals MA
- Augmentative Communication Program
- Down Syndrome Program

facebook

## Blogs

- [www.prAACticalaac.org](http://www.prAACticalaac.org)
- <http://www.spectronicsinoz.com/blog/>
- [www.chapelhillsnippets.blogspot.org](http://www.chapelhillsnippets.blogspot.org)
- [www.teachinglearnerswithmultiplesds.blogspot.com](http://www.teachinglearnerswithmultiplesds.blogspot.com)



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