

# Partner-Assisted Communication Strategies for Children Who Face Multiple Challenges

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## Which Children and Why:

- Children who face significant motor and communication challenges
- Additional multiple challenges including visual challenges
- Beginning Communicators or children who don't have any effective forms of communication yet
- Struggling Device Users
- When other communication strategies are not available at the moment

## "Smart Partner" vs. Technology:

- Read subtle nonverbal cues
- Adjust the interaction as needed
- Accuracy of motor skills is not as crucial for success
- Focus on developing language and communication skills separately from motor skills

## Parallel Programming:

- Juggling the sensory-motor, language, and cognitive demands need to control a communication device or access a computer can be very overwhelming
- If we wait for everything to develop in a coordinated fashion, you will be waiting forever
- We don't want to hold the child back in one area because of deficits or difficulties in other areas
- We need to be careful that we continue to develop rich cognitive schemas and not just splinter skills
- The answer to this problem is to work on individual components in parallel. Use functional and natural contexts to give the child opportunities to develop skills, where only one component is cognitively challenging them at a time. Provide a variety of these types of activities that challenge the child in all areas of development, but mainly just one at a time. Help the child make associations see the relationships between skills that she is developing.

## Pragmatic Organization of Vocabulary (Gayle Porter):

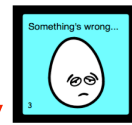
- Begin with communicative intents and quick words on page 1
- Examples of Communicative Intents:

- I want something
- Something's wrong
- I'll tell you what I think (or I like and I don't like)
- It's time for something
- Let's chat
- I'm asking a question
- Let's pretend
- I have an idea
- I'm telling you a story

- Examples of Quick Words:
  - more
  - done
  - different
  - me, mine, my turn
  - you, yours, your turn
  - someone else
  - hurry
  - uh oh!
  - help

- Pages are numbered for easy organization
  - Page one - intent: I'll tell you what I think - go to page 4
    - page 4 - choose item - that makes me mad!
  - Page one - intent: Something's Wrong - go to page 3
    - page 3 - choose item - I'm tired!
  - Page one - intent: Something's Wrong - go to page 3
    - page 3 - choose item - something hurts - go to page 3c (body parts)
    - page 3c - choose item - tummy
- Activity specific pages
  - variety of vocabulary related to one activity
  - Stay on this page during activity, unless child indicates something else to say
- Categories: These pages are used like a dictionary, when needed for expansion and generating novel ideas not found on other pages.
- Customize language in the system - according to the needs, environments and desires of the child

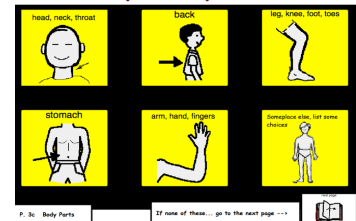
"Something's wrong"  
go to page 3



"Something Hurts"



"head, neck, throat"



## Learning a Partner-Assisted Communication System is Like Learning a Foreign Language:

- Different structure
- Different pace

- Different pragmatics
- Different interactive strategies

### **Strategies for Teaching Partner Assisted Communication:**

- Input comes before output - Receptive Language first
  - Input should be the same form as the child will later use for output
  - Aided Language Stimulation
- Ask Questions - using the system
- Symbolize communicative intent
- Model communicative intent in context
- Encourage others to model
- Look for subtle, non-verbal communicative intents and negations
- Model a form of "Yes" / "No" as you go
- Start with the child's way to confirm - for example a smile
- Use of both a confirmation and negation can make the communication more clear
- Move toward adding technology when possible
  - May need to reduce cognitive task when adding technology
- Model initiation
- Assume the child has something to say
- Respond to all communication as intent - build a sense of competence
- Engineer opportunities for Expression according to communicative intent
- Communication is new information, not something already known by the partner
- Model operational speech as well as social speech
  - Use different tone, voice and expression for self-talk and operational speech than you do for the actual social communication.
- Model self-talk
  - Organize
  - Predict
  - Confirm
  - Remember
  - Encourage
  - Correct
- Model Additional Self-Talk that may be needed by a Scanner:
  - What do I want to say?
  - Do I have a way to say it
  - Where is it?
  - Listen, no, listen, no, listen, yes
  - Weight shift, move, recover, wait
  - Remember what I was Saying
  - Monitor flow

- Hold that thought for later....
- Monitor communication partner
- Repair communication break downs
- What's that noise? etc.....
- Give All the Choices First. Then, List them Simply and Slowly
- Position yourself for best observation by the child visually and auditorally
- Watch the child for clues of active listening and self-talking along with you to guide your pace and acknowledge his/her efforts
- State why you are turning to a particular page: "I'll tell you who" ... "go to 14" ... so I'll turn to page 14 which is the people page
- When the child is communicating to you, you can also use speech to let them know what operational cue, you are responding to.
- Be careful not to give too many verbal prompts
- Focus on giving logical feedback to the child - Not "hit the switch"
- Expand upon what the child communicates using the same system
- Focus on interaction
- Have a conversation
- Use Both "High Tech" and "Light Tech"

### Sample Beginning Partner-Assisted Communication System for Auditory Scanner

