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Engagement: The Building Blocks of Language and Communication

Engaging with your child in fun and preferred activities often creates the best opportunities for modeling language on AAC and building meaningful communication

Follow your child's interest and motivation

- Start with something your child has a special interest in or incorporate it into an activity (i.e superhero, cartoon etc.).
- If you have difficulty finding motivators try starting out by imitating what your child is doing during play.
- Try breaking up activity in to smaller 1-2 min at a time.
- Allow your child to transition in and out of an activity.
- Build on your child's interest and add language by modeling core words on their AAC system.

If you wait for the look you will never get the language

- Modeling consistently throughout the day during motivating activities and routines is the best way for your child to learn to use their AAC system.
- Modeling doesn't require the child to look or touch the pictures.
- Every child is different, and it could take days, months, years of modeling before a child learns to use system expressively.
- Children need to be immersed in a language before they are expected to use it.

Decrease demands, increase invitations

- Shifting language can change an interaction from a demand or 'test' into an invitation.
- Instead of saying 'show me more,' say 'bubbles are fun, lets blow more' while modeling [more].
- Children will often lose interest if something is too hard or not enjoyable.
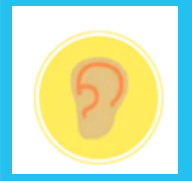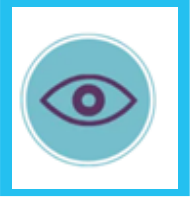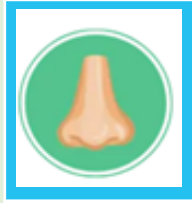
Ensure access to AAC

- Children learning to use a pictures to communicate need consistent access to their AAC system.
- Make sure your child's AAC is somewhere in sight and at their level.
- Try to make AAC available in all environments.

References: Hartmann, A.(2020). AssistiveWare; O'Neill, T., Light, J, Rope, L. (2018). Effects of Interventio that include Added AAC input on the communicatio of individuals with Complex Communication Needs: A Meta- Analysis. J Speech Lang Hear Res. 61(7)

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Engagement: The Building Blocks of Language and Communication

Sensory play is a great way to tap into your child's motivation and build on their language skills. Depending on your child's preferences, sensory activities can be regulating and engaging. It can set the stage for lots of communication opportunities. Not all sensory activities are enjoyed equally by your child, careful not to overwhelm or under-stimulate their senses. Explore a variety of sensory play to find just right fit!

Eliciting Language through Sensory Play

Sense		Play Activities	Language to Model
Touch		• Sand play • Water play at the sink or bath time! • Squish some play dough (add sand, beads or buttons for different textures) • Finger paint with shaving cream	It [feel] sticky My hand is [wet] Let's [dry] it They are the [same] color!
Sound		• Sing along to familiar songs, nursery rhymes • Musical toys • Music instruments (drums, shakers)	Let's sing [loud]! Ooh! It's [quiet] Make the music [go] Let's listen [again]
Sight		• Glow in the dark toys, light up toy and glow sticks. • Light bright • Toys with spinning parts • Bouncy balls • Pouring water and sand	Turn light [on]! [go] ball, [go]! Dump [more] water We are [all done]
Smell		• Scribble and color with scented markers • Add cinnamon, pumpkin pie spice, vanilla extra to your playdough. • Fruit stamping with oranges, lemon and lime • Explore different scent during cooking or baking	I [like] this smell I do [not] [like] it Smell [good]
Body Awareness		• Animal walks • Obstacle courses • Tickle games • Deep pressure massage • Bear hugs	[stop] tickles! [more] tickles [on] feet [go] over, [go] under I'm [all done] Let's do [more]!
Balance and Movement		• Swing or DIY with blankets or bedsheets. • Balancing games (walk along a taped path). • Bouncing on a yoga ball • Ring around the Rosie	I [want] [up] Let's [go] [down] [more] swing [go] fast [Help] [me]