

# Understanding and Nurturing the Communicative Competence of Learners with Significant Disabilities: Part 2

## Slide 1

Understanding and Nurturing the Communicative Competence of Learners with Significant Disabilities: Part 2

Montana Deaf-Blind Project Webinar Series

August 2000

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## Slide 2

Pre-Symbolic Communication

Key Elements of Individualized Instruction

- **MOTIVATION:** What are reinforcing topics and settings for the learner to communicate about?
- **POTENTIAL RESPONSES:** How will the learner express himself/herself?
- **GAINING ATTENTION:** How will the learner initiate communication with others?
- **REINSTATEMENT:** How will the learner indicate to another person that s/he would like to continue an interaction?
- **REQUESTING/CHOICEMAKING:** How will the learner indicate his/her preference between two or more objects?
- **PROMOTING PROGRESS:** How do you design instruction to promote steady progress?

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Level I Learner

- **Currently;** Spontaneous reflexive/reactive behavior

Partner perceived communication; assigns meaning

- **Issues:** lack of goal directed/purposeful behavior; lack of awareness of self, others and world around him
- **Focus of intervention:** to establish purposeful behavior by creating highly responsive environments
- **Goals;**
  - **Sender** maintain /increase alert state for learning (emotional regulation)
  - Increase sender awareness of /attention to **topics** in interactions with **receiver**
  - Demonstrate detectable and doable **means**
  - **Sender** demonstrate contingency awareness (cause-effect)

## Slide 4

Arousal State Tracking

(adapted from the SLK 2005 by M. Smith)

- \*States; (descriptions of states from Brazelton et al 1977; Snell and Brown, 2002 as presented in SLK)
- Asleep: Eyes closed, rhythmic breathing and/or little or no movement. No evident response to sensory stimuli.
- Drowsy: Heavy eyelids, repeated opening/closing of the eyes, unfocused stare, intermittent orientation to sensory events in the environment for a short time.

- Quiet Alert: Open eyes. Focused attention on some sensory event in the environment; attention may be visual, tactile or auditory.
- Active Alert: Observable interaction with the object or person stimulating attention, some voluntary intentional movement.
- Fussy: Mild distress and inability to maintain orientation/attention.
- Crying/Agitated: frown, cry, irregular breathing, increased tension /body tone, engage in self-injurious behavior.

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Arousal State Tracking

(adapted from the SLK 2005 by M. Smith)

Child:

Observer:

Date:

Time Interval:

Time	Activity	State*	Position (how was the child positioned at that moment)	Specific stimuli available (what was available to the child ? e.g. music, food, vestibular at that moment)	Ambient conditions (describe the physical environment e.g. hot, noisy, overhead lighting at that moment)	Social Conditions (Who was interacting with the child do not count if person present but not engaged w/ child at that moment)

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- **Active Alert**: Observable interaction with the object or person stimulating attention some voluntary intentional movement
- **Fussy**: Mild distress and inability to maintain orientation/attention
- **Crying/Agitated** frown cry irregular breathing increased tension /body tone engage in self injurious behavior



**"LIKES" INFORMATION**



Child:  Date:

<b>FOODS</b> <i>taste/ texture</i>	<b>SMELLS</b>	<b>TOUCH</b> <i>texture/ fuzzy/ fabrics</i> <i>light - heavy</i>	<b>MOVEMENT</b> <i>rock/ bounce</i> <i>swing</i>	<b>VIBRATION</b> <i>car ride</i> <i>toys/ appliances</i>	<b>SIGHTS</b> <i>lights/colors</i>	<b>SOUNDS</b> <i>voices/ music</i> <i>pitch/ loudness</i> <i>environmental</i>

<b>MUSCLES</b> <i>push - pull</i> <i>heavy weight</i>	<b>PEOPLE</b>	<b>PLACES</b>	<b>ACTIVITIES</b>	<b>TOYS</b>	<b>SELF STIMULATION</b> <b>BEHAVIORS</b>	<b>OTHER</b>

**"DISLIKES" INFORMATION**



<b>Child:</b>	<b>Date:</b>
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<b>FOODS</b> taste/ texture	<b>SMELLS</b>	<b>TOUCH</b> texture/ fuzzy/ fabrics light - heavy	<b>MOVEMENT</b> rock/ bounce swing	<b>VIBRATION</b> car ride toy/ appliances	<b>SIGHTS</b> lights/colors	<b>SOUNDS</b> voices/ music pitch/ loudness environmental

<b>MUSCLES</b> push - pull bear weight	<b>PEOPLE</b>	<b>PLACES</b>	<b>ACTIVITIES</b>	<b>TOYS</b>	<b>SELF STIMULATION BEHAVIORS</b>	<b>OTHER</b>

Videotape Coding Form

Student:

Observer:

		Affective	Arm	Leg	Whole Body	Head	Visual	Other		
		V O C A L I Z E Y E N	S F M R C I O R L W D Y L	T O W A R E R A A D Y L	G R N O N W A R E R A A D Y L	L A T T O O D E W T O R A H U P N L D R	T R G V T A A R R H C Z R R K E T R		COMMENT	
1.	On									
2.	Off									
3.	On									
4.	Off									
5.	On									
6.	Off									

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Level II Learner

- **Currently:** Spontaneous purposeful/goal directed behavior

Partner perceived communication; assigns meaning

- **Issues:** Learner does not yet demonstrate coordinated behavior to both partner and topic
- **Focus of intervention:** Respond to potentially communicative behaviors so that learner becomes aware of their communicative purposes
- **Goals:**
  - Expand means of responding that serve to attract attention and reinstate desired interactions
  - Demonstrate preference of topics that are familiar to him/her
  - Reinstate desired interactions initiated by partner
  - Sender increases attention to partners and topics (joint attention)

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Expand Means of Expression

Communication Signal Inventory (Blackstone, 1991)

- Signal (What the communicator does)
- What it means (what the partner thinks the signal means)
- What do you do/say? (How the partner should consistently react)

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Reinstatement

Helps to establish a relationship with the child

- A reason to want to gain your attention

Helps child link his behavior to his environment

- May lead to development of detectable and doable behaviors

Helps to provide an access to the environment

- Familiarity with different topics
- Preferences for certain topics

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"Let's Do It Again" Interaction Tracking Form

Child:

Partner Initiates interaction with child.

- Pause briefly (10 seconds or depending on child; the time it takes for a child to respond may differ from child to child and may change as he/she becomes more familiar with the interaction)
- Observe for child's attempt to start or get you to start activity again

Child response (ex; partner bounces child on ball and pauses...child moves up and down like she is trying to bounce herself)

- Note: if this is a new interaction, it may be necessary to repeat it several times before the child develops an idea of what its about and is able to respond

Record the following:

- What did you do to interact with the child (date)
- What did the child do to tell you, "lets do it again"

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Level III-IV Learner

- Currently: *Intentional pre-symbolic communication*

*Learner directs his/her behavior to a receiver with an identifiable message*

- Issues: Learner's communication is currently restricted to topics and receivers that are present in that moment and his/her efforts to engage his/her partner may be restricted
- Focus of intervention: Shape non-conventional gestures into conventional gestures and/or target symbol use
- Goals:
  - Increase **sender** initiations and responses to interactions with receiver to make requests/choices and reinstate desired topics from array that is accessible (rate and fluency [e.g. decreased latency])
  - Increase **sender** strategies for establishing and maintaining joint attention with **receiver** around identifiable message/topic
  - Expand **means** of expression to use of more detectable (conventional or symbolic) forms
  - Demonstrate 1:1 correspondence between symbol **means** and referent
  - Discriminate between increased **topic** array of objects or symbols
  - Increase number of **partners** and **topics**

Expand communicative intents

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### Level V-VII Learner

- Currently: *concrete or abstract communication*

*Learner directs his/her behavior to a receiver with an identifiable message using symbols*

- Issues: Learner's communication is currently restricted to topics and receivers who are present in that moment. Learner may use symbols for limited functions or in single "word" utterances
- Focus of intervention: Increase symbolic communication and expand communicative intents
- Goals:
  - (Increase) **sender** initiations and responses to interactions with a **receiver** to make requests/choices and reinstate desired **topics** from symbol array (referents may not be present)
  - Combine symbolic **means** to expand mean length of utterance
  - Increase learner access to communication system/**means**
  - Move to more abstract symbolic **means**
  - Discriminate between increased array of symbols
  - Increase number of **receivers and topics**
  - Expand communicative intents

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### Types of Tangible Symbols

Levels of Representation	Referent	Symbol
Identical Object	Raisins; bolt	A few raisins glued to a piece of cardboard; a bolt is shrink-wrapped onto cardboard backing
Partial or Associated Object	Shoe; bicycle; car/out; eating	Shoelace; handle grip; car key; spoon
One or Two Shared Features	Pretzel; multicolored vinyl; therapy ball	Thermoform of pretzel (shares shape & size with referent); wood block covered with multicolored vinyl; shared texture and color with referent (for blind individuals only one feature, texture, is shared)
Artificial Association	Work table; cafeteria	Ribbed rubber mat is attached to table, a small piece of the mat serves as the symbol; wooden apple shape is attached to cafeteria door, a similar shape serves as the symbol
Photographs	Self explanatory	Self explanatory
Line drawings	Self explanatory	Self explanatory

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### "tangible" Means...

- Physically Tangible
- Conceptually Tangible- to the INDIVIDUAL USER (eye of the beholder)

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### Tangible Symbols Instruction Key Elements

- Readiness
- Motivation
- Indicating Response
- Comprehension
- Promoting Progress

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[www.osepideastthatwork.org](http://www.osepideastthatwork.org)



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### Comprehension

When the child indicates a symbol he/she should also be asked to show/indicate what the symbol means (1:1 correspondence)

When the data clearly indicates that the child understands what the symbol stands for then it may be no longer necessary to require the comprehension check

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### Promoting Progress

- How do you help the child to keep learning?
- Expand vocabulary
- Increase size of symbol array
- Generalize the use of symbols to other situations and with other people



- Teach new functions
- Multi-symbol utterances
- Portability
- Change symbol type