Facilitating Language Development for Your Students in Special Education

By Abbey Steele and Liz Heisler

About us

Abbey Steele - I graduated from ISU in 2015 with a LBS I certificate. I have spent my 3 years as a special education teacher working in a life skills setting (mod-severe cog/autism) with students ranging from ages 5-14. I am passionate about working with students with significant disabilities at the middle/high school level, and I will begin working towards my master's degree in Applied Behavior Analysis this fall.

Liz Heisler - I am a Speech-Language Pathologist with a Listening and Spoken Language Graduate Certificate from ISU. I worked at Chicago Public Schools for 2 years in Deaf/Hard-of-Hearing programs, blended early childhood programs, and resource programs in PreK - 8 settings. For the past two years and currently, I work at Henry-Stark Special Education in Kewanee/Geneseo in our Life Skills programs (mod-severe cog/Autism) and cross-categorical programs in K-12 settings.

Outline of Presentation

1. Development of Language/Literacy
2. Ways to provide language-rich opportunities in your classroom during ELA/Language/Reading
3. Ways to provide language-rich opportunities in your classroom during other subjects
4. Ideas to implement
5. Ways we collaborate
6. Questions/Answers

Overview of Language Development

Early expressive language development:
- 12-18 months: Words
- 24 months: Development of verbs
- 27 months: Development of sentences
- 26 months: Tense onset

*Verbs are very important!

Development of receptive language/answering questions:
- 2-3 years: Answer simple who, what, where questions
- 3-4 years: Answer all who, what where, and why questions
- 4-5 years: Answer when questions

*Not all questions are alike!

Promoting Language through AAC

- Augmentative and Alternative Communication
  - Low-tech: Core vocabulary boards, Go-Talks, bigMACKS, PECS
    - Voice-output vs. no voice output
  - High tech: Speech-Generating Devices (SGD), NovaChat, iPad with LAMP WFL, Tobii-Dynavox TI15
- Use of an SGD for minimally verbal school-age children with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) as an intervention and/or treatments increased spontaneous expressive language and use of novel utterances compared with the same interventions and/or treatments that did not include use of an SGD (Kasari et al., 2014)
- Aided Language Stimulation/Partner Assisted Scanning
  - Strategy used to encourage use of the AAC system in the classroom
  - Model appropriate language on student's device to show them how to use it
  - 70% of the time and more modeling of comments than questions

Literacy Development

"The development of literacy skills is one of the most empowering developments in the lives of individuals with significant communication disabilities who require AAC." (Light & Kent-Walsh, 2003)

- AAC users <u>ARE</u> capable of learning literacy skills, but many haven't had opportunity to learn
  - Often lack basic literacy skills
  - Often underachieving compared to typically developing peers
  - Often have reduced expectations
  - Require intensive intervention

- Determining when to teach literacy skills
  - Refer to FAQ portion of <u>Penn State's literacy curriculum</u>
  - Avoid "reading readiness" idea
  - Dylan's story - <u>always</u> presume competence!
    - Spoken language is <u>not</u> a prerequisite for literacy learning
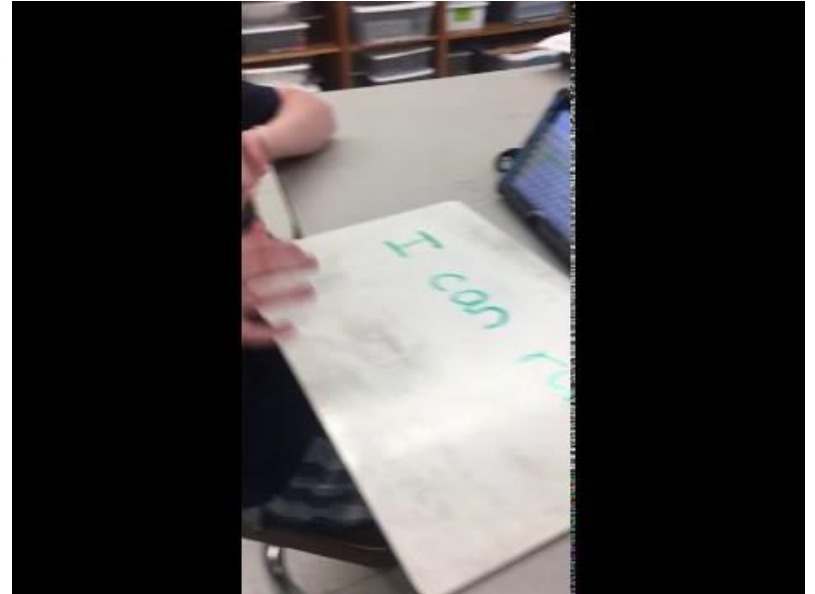
Importance of Literacy Skills

- AAC users and students with significant needs will use literacy skills to:
  - Access community
    - Identify community/safety signs
    - Complete job application
    - Read menu

  - Develop relationships
    - Send a text or email
    - Access social media

  - Participate in rec/leisure activities
    - Browse internet
    - Read book
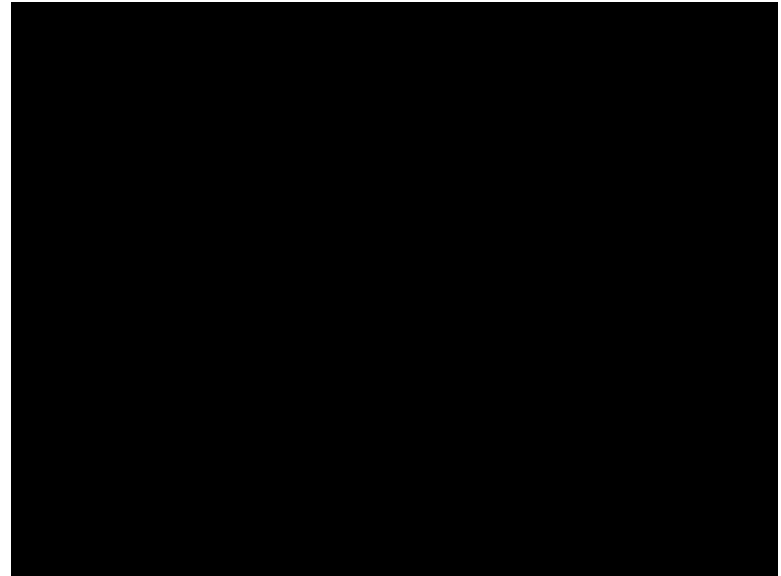
These are only a few examples. The list is endless!

Where Do I Begin?

- Learning to read is a complex process

- Refer to Penn State's [literacy instruction model](#)
    - Targeted towards and adapted for learners with complex communication needs
    - Instructional procedures, sequence, skills based on recommendations of National Reading Panel

- Provides a multimodal approach to teaching literacy to AAC users and learners with significant needs
    - Language skills
    - Phonological awareness skills
    - Letter-sound correspondence
    - Decoding skills
    - Sight word recognition
    - Reading and understanding simple texts

- Teach 2-4 skills at a time
    - Target skills at top of list (phonological awareness, letter-sound correspondence), and move down (decoding, sight word recognition, shared reading, etc.) as learner begins to acquire skills

Ways to provide language-rich opportunities in your classroom during daily ELA/Language/Literacy

Core Vocabulary

- Core = high frequency words
- Fringe= words that occur infrequently and lack versatility
- 80% of our vocabulary is made up of core vocabulary words as they are consistent and highly predictable
- 20% of our vocabulary is made up of fringe vocabulary (names, toys, food items)
- If we focus on fringe, we get many 1-word responses
  - Fringe words: bubbles, cookie, bear
  - Core words: I want that, more please, can I have that, we need it, it goes in/up

DLM First 40 Core

"The DLM Core Vocabulary Project was initiated to determine the vocabulary that is necessary for students with significant cognitive disabilities to engage, learn, and demonstrate knowledge in an academic environment." (DLM Professional Learning Team at UNC-Chapel Hill, 2013).

- Recommended for students who use AAC

- Selected from larger core vocabulary set based on usefulness in everyday communication and in addressing DLM Essential Elements

- Alignment to Common Core/Essential Elements

- First 40 list

DLM First 40/Dolch Sight Word Hybrid

- Teachers can cross-reference DLM First 40 Core with Dolch sight words to create hybrid model for literacy instruction
- Generates list of 20 words - use as starting point

DYNAMIC LEARNING MAPS

DLM™ CORE VOCABULARY "FIRST 40"

1.	I	like	not	want
2.	help	it	more	different
3.	who	she	you	he
4.	where	up	on	in
5.	me	make	get	look
6.	what	need	are	is
7.	some	put	all	this
8.	don't	that	go	do
9.	when	finished	can	here
10.	open	turn	stop	over

Complete Dolch Word List Divided by Level

Pre-primer	Primer		Grade One	Grade Two		Grade Three
a	all	under	after	always	why	about
and	am	want	again	around	wish	better
away	are	was	an	because	work	bring
big	at	well	any	been	would	carry
blue	ate	went	ask	before	write	clean
can	be	what	as	best	your	cut
come	black	white	by	both		done
down	brown	who	could	buy		draw
find	but	will	every	call		drink
for	came	with	fly	cold		eight
funny	did	yes	from	does		fall
go	do		give	don't		far
help	eat		going	fast		full
here	four		had	first		got
I	get		has	five		grow
in	good		her	found		hold
is	have		him	gave		hot
it	he		his	goes		hurt
jump	into		how	green		if
little	like		just	its		keep
look	must		know	made		kind
make	new		let	many		laugh
me	no		live	off		light
my	now		may	or		long
not	on		of	pull		much
one	our		old	read		myself
play	out		once	right		never
red	please		open	sing		only
run	pretty		over	sit		own
said	ran		put	sleep		pick
see	ride		round	tell		seven
the	saw		some	their		shall*
three	say		stop	these		show
to	she		take	those		six
two	so		thank	upon		small
up	soon		them	us		start
we	that		then	use		ten
where	there		think	very		today
yellow	they		walk	wash		together
you	this		were	which		try
	too		when			warm

* 'shall' has dropped out of use

Group Language Lessons

Beginning: Provide a schedule, start with introductions, greetings/hello song

Lesson: Interactive/Adaptive books targeting specific core words

Activity: Sensory activity, movement activity, bingo/matching games - all related to book/lesson.

Ending: Reinforcement, ending greeting, choice of song

Other Activities

Sensory bins
- Target monthly core words/phrases
  - Examples: open the box, take it out, put it in, I want it
- Reflect monthly/seasonal theme (e.g., bugs, winter, camping)
- Allow students with more significant needs to participate
- Make it age-appropriate!
  - Examples: winter clothing, water (wash/dry or clean/dirty), planting

Cooking Class
- Target prepositions, verbs, and core words
- Allow opportunities for strategies such as, modeling appropriate language, giving choices, sabotage, and/or wait time
- Create script, practice reading, and deliver treats to school staff

Hi !

We had cooking class today.

We made snack mix.

We hope you like it !

DATA, DATA, DATA

- Data starts with goals!

  - [Dynamic Assessment Goal Grid by Tobii-Dynavox](#) for our students with significant communication needs.

- Example: Student will transport his/her communication device to all activities in his/her daily schedule with indirect verbal cues with 80% accuracy.

- Example: Using speech generating device, student will use learned sentence constructions (carrier phrases) for creative 2+ word phrases (e.g.,"I want/see/have ___.") in structured language activities with indirect verbal cues with 80% accuracy.

CHAIN OF CUES EXAMPLE

- **Situation:** Entering a room
- **Communication Opportunity Targeted:** Greeting others ("Hi!")
- **Natural Cue:** Others saying hello.
- **Indirect Cue:**

  Search light – randomly moving light/pointer over device

  - **Verbal** – "Did you hear what they said?" or "I wonder if there is something you could say back."
  - **Visual/Gestural** – waving hand or pointing to the people
- **Direct Verbal Cue:** "They said, *hello* to you."
- **Direct Pointer/Light Cue:** Showing the location of "Hi!" on the device without activating it.
- **Physical Assistance:** Brief physical help to select the correct button or picture.

Chain of Cues
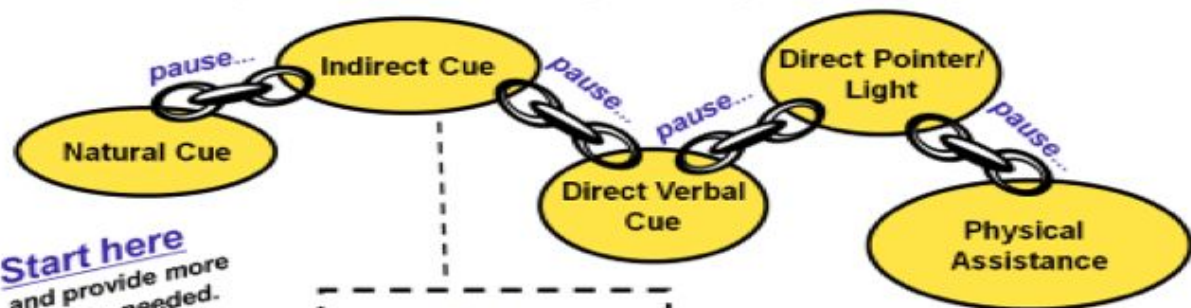
Natural Cue — pause... — **Indirect Cue** — pause... — pause... — **Direct Verbal Cue** — pause... — **Direct Pointer/Light** — pause... — **Physical Assistance**

Start here and provide more cues as needed.

Visual/Gestural — Verbal — Search Light
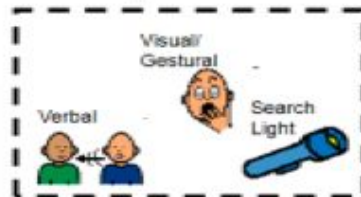
Provide Partner Augmented Input consistently!

DynaVox Mayer-Johnson

Data, Data, Data continued...

Date/Activity	Level of Independence							Response Time	Purpose			Comments/#of words
	NC	IC	DV	Mod	HOH	NW	RH		Ques	Req	Com	

Date/Activity/icon selected	Data (+/-) with Prompt									
	+/-									
	IND									

DATE/ TIME:	ENVIRONMENT (location of use: i.e., classroom, hallway, cafeteria, therapy session, etc.)	ACTIVITY (What was going on? What was the student being asked to do?)	Number of appropriate activations (use tick marks)	Number of total activations (use tick marks)	Types of activations (see codes below) Use tick marks for all activations.	LEVEL OF CUES (see codes below) Use tick marks for all prompts given.

- Always note the type of prompt given when tallying accuracy
- Provide clipboards to staff and have multiple data sheets around the classroom to encourage everyone to take data!
- Qualitative data is always encouraged, as well!

Encouraging use AT ALL TIMES

- Did you know it would take 84 years for a child to be at the same language level as a two-year old using this device only 2x week, 20-30 minutes?
- Device and access needs to be available at all times!
    - Example: bathroom, lunch, recess, music, P.E., art, and at home, too!
- Aided Language Stimulation
    - Accessibility, Message, Attention
- Train and teach support staff, teachers, and students!

AAC is my language.
When you speak it to me, I learn.
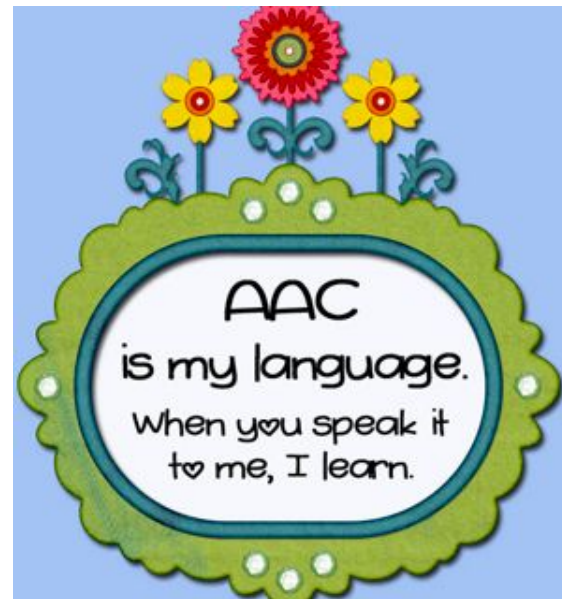
Ways to promote language and literacy development in your classroom during non-language activities.

Reading

- Students read targeted and/or mastered words during shared reading activities

- Scholastic sight word readers

- Reading A-Z high frequency books

- Unique Learning System/News2You

Predictable Chart Writing

- Supports emergent and conventional writers and readers

- All students have opportunity to participate, be successful, and share own ideas

- Great activity for students who use AAC to use existing and/or targeted vocabulary

- Occurs over 5-day period (your entire week of writing is planned!)
  - Day 1: Write chart
  - Day 2: Reread sentences
  - Day 3: Work with cut-up sentence strips
  - Day 4: Be the sentence
  - Day 5: Make a book
    - TarHeel Reader

- Helpful resource guides
  - UNC webpage
  - Speak for Yourself
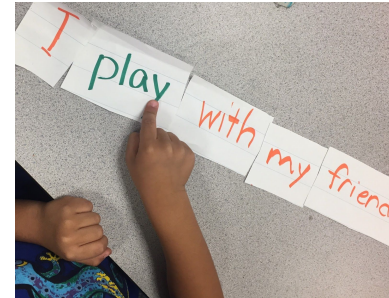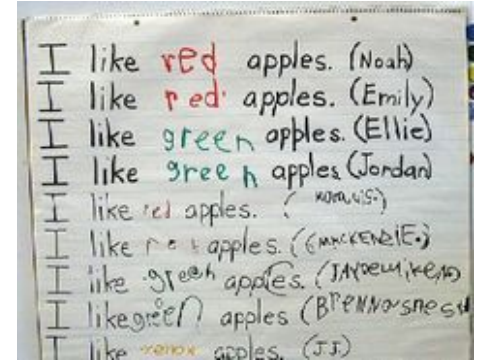
Science and Social Studies

- [Answering questions with sentence strips](#)

- Pre-teaching vocabulary and/or knowing where vocabulary is on certain AAC systems.

- Adapting curriculum to fit AAC/vocabulary needs of the student.
  - Example: Amphibians vs. reptiles, dry vs. wet

- Ask simple wh- questions, instead why or when questions.

Math

- Core vocabulary boards with fringe access to numbers and/or shapes
- Prepositions for math using sentence strips, core boards or any AAC during cooking class, fraction lessons
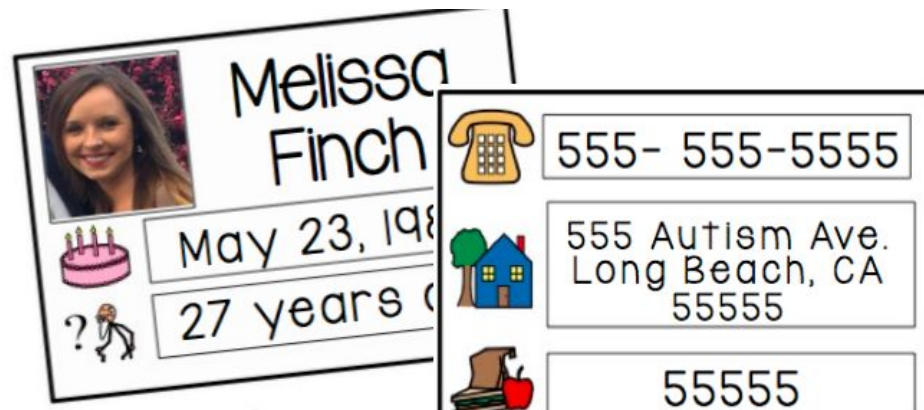- Make it a book! Or download one from AAC Language Lab.

Two dogs are dancing.

two

Calendar/Personal Information

- Access to core board with months, years, days of the week
- Personal ID cards
- Low-tech ideas with bigMACKS
  - Access to say 'hello' or the name of the student programmed to "My name is ___"
- Access to visual choices
  - Songs, names, good vs. bad

Our implementation program

- Core Words of the Month!
- Large core board posted at front of classroom for modeling
- Related to monthly language group lessons
  - Example: Feelings book from AAC Language Lab and Eggs for holiday
- Examples during your day:
  - Arrival: I feel happy to be here! How do you feel? Put it in your locker.
  - Binders/Work: Put it on the table. Take it off. Put it in/on.
  - Snack/Lunch/Fun food Friday: I feel hungry! He feels happy! Put it in the microwave.
  - Recess: Get on the swing. Take it off. Put it on.
  - Music/P.E.: I feel sad, I don't like music. I feel excited, I love P.E.
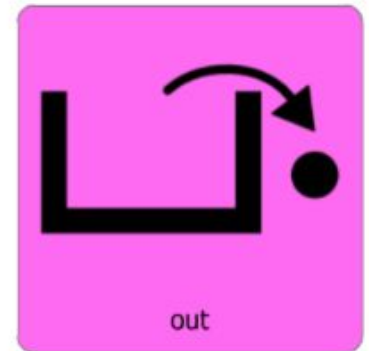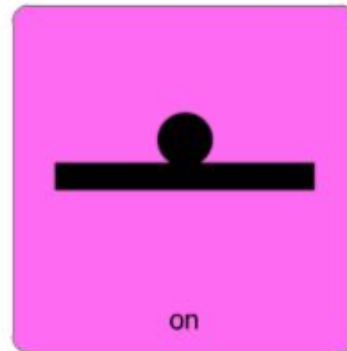
How We Collaborate

- Teacher supports during group language activities
- SLP works at specific station during instructional centers
- Work jointly to develop IEPs (depending on student, complete Tobii Dynavox Dynamic Assessment Goal Grid)
- Teacher implements language and communication activities/strategies in classroom
  - Monthly core words
  - Language Lab books
- Complete school-wide trainings in general education classrooms

Resources We LOVE!

- [Language Acquisition through Motor Planning - LAMP](#)
  - [Core Word of the Week](#)
- [Illinois Assistive Technology Program - Springfield](#)
- [Penn State's Literacy Instruction website](#)
- [UNC's Center for Literacy and Disability Studies](#)
  - [Project Core](#)
  - [TarHeel Reader](#)
  - [DLM professional development modules](#)
- [The Autism Helper](#)
- [SpeechRoomNews](#)
- [PrAACtical AAC](#)

Questions?

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