

USING A COMMUNICATION BOOK

Children's Treatment Network of Simcoe York
Augmentative Communication Consultation Services (ACCS)

WHAT IS A COMMUNICATION BOOK USED FOR:

- To teach children visual language and give them a way to express themselves in any setting/environment and with a variety of communication partners
- To support their understanding of language
- To support their expressive language (e.g., clarify their speech, if it is difficult to understand)

WHERE DO I START WITH THE BOOK?

- Students must be taught how to use their tool; all communication partners (e.g., teacher, EA, parent, sibling, daycare provider, and community member) should model using the Communication Book wherever possible.
- Take time to explore the tool together, talk about where vocabulary is found.
- Respond appropriately when the child is pointing to symbols. They are exploring, so provide them with the word as well as a context for that word (e.g., 'EAT' symbol— "You are **hungry**, you want to **eat**" while pointing to the 'EAT' symbol; 'PLAY' symbol— "You're right! Your brother is **playing** a video game over there.").

HOW TO MODEL:

- Modelling means pointing to the symbol (vocabulary) in the book when you speak.
- Modelling does not mean testing the child about the location of vocabulary (e.g., "where is 'MOM'?", "find 'APPLE'").
- You do not need to model EVERY word you say (e.g., "Let's **go** to the **park**" but only model 'Go' and 'PARK' in the book; "I **feel** tired. I **need** a nap" but only model 'FEEL' and 'NEED' in the book).
- Model in short grammatically correct phrases (e.g., 'I' + 'GO' + 'PARK' while saying "I am **going** to the **park**").
- Aim to model vocabulary hundreds of times throughout the day as repetition helps learning. This practice helps to support the learning of both the child and communication partner.
- Model the same words in different contexts to help them generalize those concepts across situations (e.g., 'GO': to the park, to bed, to grandma's, I want to go, you need to go, go away).

HOW TO USE THE BOOK FOR CLARIFICATION:

- If the child you are supporting uses some speech that is difficult to understand, their communication book can help them clarify their message
- They can point to 1 or 2 symbols to help you understand
- At first, you will need to prompt them to get their book when you don't understand them
- Be honest and let them know you don't understand and then direct them to get their book
- Make sure it is always out and available so it is easily accessible when communication breakdowns happen
- You can help them narrow down the topic by helping them flip through the categories in the book and asking yes/no questions: "Are you talking about a PLACE...a PERSON...an ACTIVITY?"
- If you figure out their message without using the book, you can still model the word, so they know where to find it for the next time. e.g. if they were trying to say: "sister" you could turn to the PEOPLE page and model: "sister"
- The exact word they need will not always be available but they might be able to narrow it down by providing the category and describing it, e.g. if they wanted to say "bear", they can point to: "ANIMAL", "BROWN" and "BIG"
- This is a skill you can practice with them and help them learn to do through modeling

References:

1. Aided Language Stimulation handout from An Overview From: Infusing Assistive Technology into Early Childhood Classrooms, Early Assistive Technology Training Project Staff: (1996). J. Wilcox, T. Norman-Murch, J. Oberstein, D. Kempka, M. Volkmann, E. Malena, & C. Musselwhite.
2. Getting Started with Core handout: CTN ACCS July 2013