

## Addressing the Challenges of Students with Severe Disabilities & Complex Communication Needs

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## DISCLOSURE

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## SESSION OBJECTIVES

- Participants will be able to describe the academic communication status of students with the most significant disabilities
- Participants will be able to identify at least three evidence-based strategies to facilitate communication in students with significant disabilities
- Participants will be able to describe an approach to embedding communication opportunities across the curriculum

## TODAY'S SESSION

- Communication Data and Call to Action
  - Implications of data on the OUTCOMES for students with communication needs.
  - Review of the literature
- Strategies to address these needs in the schools
  - Develop immediately useable communication systems
  - Identify appropriate communication learning objectives
  - Identify evidence-based strategies for teaching communication
  - Embed communication opportunities across the curriculum

## OPPORTUNITIES TO COMMUNICATE

*"Even when enrolled in general education classes, students with complex communication challenges may remain socially isolated from their classmates when receiving one-to-one paraprofessional support."*  
(Chung & Carter, 2013, p. 94)

*"...students may have access to their AAC systems but lack opportunities and reasons to use them" (Calculator & Black, 2009, p. 333)*

- With intervention, both SGD use and peer interactions can be increased for students with CCN and ID (Chung & Carter, 2013)
- We must ensure that communication is embedded throughout the academic day (Calculator, 2009; Calculator & Black, 2009).

**So What??**

## INTERVENTION: THE EVIDENCE



A review of 20 years of research on communication programming for individuals with severe intellectual and developmental disabilities "indicates that **96% of the studies reported positive changes** in some aspects of communication. These findings support the provision of communication intervention to persons with severe intellectual and developmental disabilities."

Snell et al. (2010)

## MORE EVIDENCE



"A comprehensive review of the literature pertaining to AAC and inclusive education for students with severe disabilities in inclusive classrooms resulted in an inventory of possible best practices... An inventory of 91 practices, each assigned to 1 of 8 predetermined categories, was uncovered"

(Calculator & Black, 2009, p. 329)

## COMMUNICATION EQUATION

Intent +  
Form +  
Listener Comprehension /  
Desired Response

**Successful  
Communication**



## OUR PRIMARY GOAL

To facilitate communication to enable student participation in the general curriculum

## HOW DO WE DO THIS?

- Increase communicative output
  - Identify ANY communication
  - Foster more intents
  - Refine the form
  - RESPOND and thus CONTINUE THE INTERACTION
- Select appropriate communication targets
- Embed communication intervention throughout the academic day!

## COMMUNICATION OBSERVATION

Observation Form 1: Early Communication Development

Intent	Form	Desired Response?

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## JEREMIAH

Use these questions to guide your observations.

- What was he trying to communicate? (INTENT)
- What form did his attempt take? (FORM)
- Did he get his desired response? (DESIRED RESPONSE)



## COMMUNICATION OBSERVATION

Communication Observation Form

Content – Intent – Function	Form or Mode	Desired Response?
1. Refusal	Pulls head away from the teacher.	No – partner did not respond.
2. Refusal	Pulls arm away from the teacher.	No – partner did not respond.
3. Rejection	Short vocalization.	No – partner does not acknowledge.
4. Rejection	Bats at teacher's hand.	No – partner pulls hand away and continues requesting participation.
5. Rejection	Pushes the shape away.	No – partner responds, "You're supposed to hold it," then continues the lesson.

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## BASIC COMMUNICATION TARGETS- WHAT THE STUDENTS MUST HAVE

- Protesting / Rejecting
- Gaining Attention / Calling
- Requesting Action
- Requesting Objects

"Hello!"

- Greeting / Social
- Commenting
- Sharing Information

(NJC Bill of Rights on www.asha.com)

## ADDITIONAL COMMUNICATION INTENTS FOR ACADEMICS

- Respond to questions
- Make choices
- Initiate to peers and adults
- Ask questions
- Refuse/ Reject politely

## HOW DO WE DO THIS?

- Develop a classroom matrix
  - Align communication targets with the academic curriculum
  - **EMBED** communication throughout the academic day
- Implement the matrix using evidence-based practices

(Beukelman & Mirenda, 2013; Hemmeter & Grisham-Brown, 1997; Macy, & Bricker, 2007; Salazar, 2013; Johnson & McDonnell, 2004)

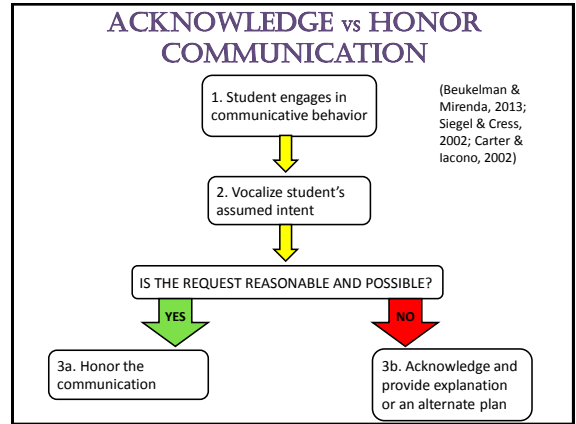
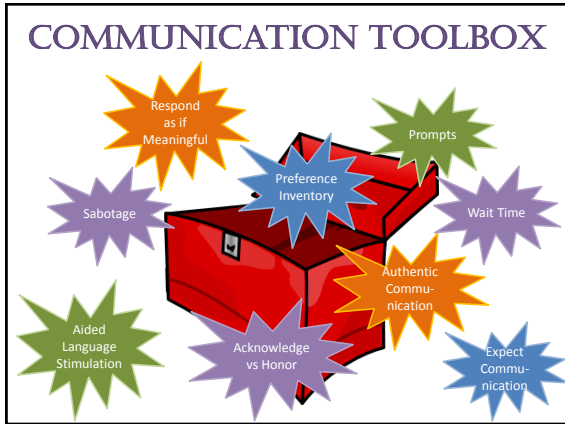
**Classroom Matrix Example:**  
Samples of Embedded Goals for Multiple Students

	Jason: Request attention	Amie: Answer Questions (responding)	Sasha: Initiate (commenting, social interactions, expressing preferences, requesting)	Dominique: Make Choices	Zé Karl: Refuse
Opening Activities			Student uses a Big Mac switch to make comments	Student uses eye gaze to select desired activities	
Reading	Student uses PA4 to say: "It's my turn"	Student uses 2-choice switch to answer simple questions about a story		Student uses eye gaze to choose a partner for a class activity	Student uses "no" switch in place of blowing a book to refuse the reading activity. (acknowledge communication goal then use their strategy to stop compliance)
Writing Workshop	Student uses wrist tapper to obtain teacher's attention		Student uses single switch to say "I want that" when she sees an attractive object or book		Student uses "no" switch in place of screaming during transitions. (use social cues card to remind her of appropriate behavior)
Math	Student uses wrist tapper to call to teacher peer	Student uses 2-choice switch to identify numbers "1" and "3"			
Games			Student uses single switch to initiate a request for "record"	Student uses eye gaze to make food choices	
Social Studies		Student finds picture of BOAT in book and using the large button on the Open Book			

Kleibert, Kearns, Page (2013) TAAC Trainings, KDE Low Incidence Initiative

## EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICES

# STRATEGIES



## RESPOND AS IF MEANINGFUL

- All behavior communicates something, AND all students communicate
- Builds the association between behavior and response
  - Cause and effect
  - Stimulus-response

(Beukelman & Mirenda, 2013; Green, O'Reilly, Itchon, & Sigafoos, 2005; Carter, & Iacono, 2002)

## PREFERENCE INVENTORY: STIMULATING COMMUNICATION

What's to die for?

- Learn about the student:
  - Likes
  - Dislikes
- Sources:
  - Family
  - Siblings
  - Peers

[http://www.iidc.indiana.edu/styles/iidc/defiles/INSTRC/Webinars/Personal\\_Preference\\_Indicator.pdf](http://www.iidc.indiana.edu/styles/iidc/defiles/INSTRC/Webinars/Personal_Preference_Indicator.pdf)

## HOW DO WE LEARN A STUDENT'S PREFERENCES?

- Ask family members to describe what the student likes and dislikes the **most**— *What does this student LOVE!*
- Record observations of student preferences: likes/dislikes
- Ask peers and siblings what are the most popular topics/activities they enjoy (i.e. chronologically age appropriate)
- Continue to introduce a range of “new” activities
- Utilize “Preference Inventories” available in literature and texts: (EXAMPLE ON NEXT SLIDE)

REMEMBER

“Just like learning to eat vegetables...”

Preferences result from repeated experience

[http://www.iidc.indiana.edu/styles/iidc/defiles/INSTRC/Webinars/Personal\\_Preference\\_Indicator.pdf](http://www.iidc.indiana.edu/styles/iidc/defiles/INSTRC/Webinars/Personal_Preference_Indicator.pdf)

The purpose of this book is to assist you in planning well for a student with developmental disabilities.

The Personal Preference Indicators are not worksheets, but are a guide for planning, developing, and using a preference inventory. The book includes information on the value of a preference inventory and how to develop one. It also includes information on how to use the inventory to plan for a student's communication and learning.

Chapter 1: Why planning is important for students with developmental disabilities. Chapter 2: How to develop a preference inventory. Chapter 3: How to use the preference inventory to plan for a student's communication and learning. Chapter 4: How to use the preference inventory to plan for a student's social and recreational activities. Chapter 5: How to use the preference inventory to plan for a student's academic activities.

1. Preferences indicate what the person's "favorites" are.

2. Consider indicators which focus on the person's "favorites".

3. Identification indicators are typically the person's "favorites" and "dislikes".

4. Identification indicators which focus on "favorites" are the person's "favorites".

5. "Favorites" indicators which center on the person's "favorites".

6. "Dislikes" indicators are considered that focus on the person's "dislikes".

7. How does the person react to "new" or "novel" activities?

8. Planning for a student's communication and learning should be based on the person's preferences. The person's preferences should be used to plan for a student's communication and learning. The person's preferences should be used to plan for a student's social and recreational activities. The person's preferences should be used to plan for a student's academic activities.

© 2002 by Beukelman and Mirenda. Copyright © Beukelman & Mirenda. 0000-0000. Personal Preference Indicators.

**Preference Indicators**  
**F•a•V•O•R•R•e•l•T•e•E•s**

*What are the person's favorites? Do you know why? How can you tell? (Use other things?)*

- outside
- inside
- friends
- alone
- non-structure
- daytime
- nighttime
- games
- snacks
- sounds
- activities
- to sleep
- time of day
- foods
- music
- words
- being alone
- being with us
- movement
- water
- toys
- touch, scratch, rough, etc.
- clothes
- place to go
- animals

*What are the person's favorite people?*

*Do you know why? How can you tell?*

*What are the person's favorite things about himself or herself?*

© 2008, Center for Learning and Leadership, University Center for Excellence, College of Medicine, 00020-1108  
 Personal Preference Indicators

## EXPECT COMMUNICATION

- Assume the student is competent
- Students can communicate
- Do not preempt the need to communicate
- Give responsibility to the student

(Halle, Baer, & Spradlin, 1981; Sigafoos & Mirenda, 2002)

## SABOTAGE

- In sight but out of reach
- Playing dumb
- Disrupting expectations
- Incomplete materials
- Blocking access

(Rogers-Warren & Warren, 1980; wright & Kaiser, 2012; Wright, Kaiser, Reikowsky & Roberts, 2012)

## APPROPRIATE PROMPTS

- Prompt levels
  - Full Physical
  - Partial Physical
  - Model
  - Gesture
  - Direct Verbal
  - Indirect Verbal
  - Independent

- ✓ Know the sequence so you can move up and down **in the moment**
- ✓ Use your **data**

(Duker, & Jutten, 1997; Reichle, & Johnston, 1999; Keogh, & Reichle, 1985)

## WAIT TIME

Why wait?

- To provide time for motoric responses
- To provide processing time
- To provide a signal to respond
- To provide opportunity for initiation

(Halle, Baer, & Spradlin, 1981; Hancock, & Kaiser, 2002)

## AUTHENTIC COMMUNICATION

(Beukelman, & Mirenda, 2012; Calculator, & Black, 2009; Chung, & Carter, 2013)

**CONTENT IS ESSENTIAL AND INCREASES THE SOPHISTICATION OF THE MODE OF OUTPUT**



(Beukelman, & Mirenda, 2012; Calculator, & Black, 2009; Chung, & Carter, 2013)



**AIDED LANGUAGE STIMULATION**

A strategy in which the teacher models symbol use while speaking to the student

- Facilitates receptive language development
- Models expressive language use

Directions for use:

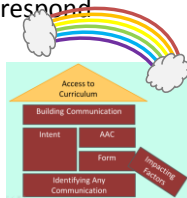
- Point to symbols for key words
- Emphasize key words vocally
- Speak more slowly than usual
- Insert numerous pauses
- Use single words followed by short phrases



(Harris & Reichle, 2004; Goossens, 1989; Romski, Sevcik, Cheslock, & Barton, 2006; Romski, & Sevcik, 1988)

**EFFECTIVE TEACHING PRINCIPLES**

- Highly engaging activities
- High levels of success
- Frequent opportunities to respond
- Systematic presentation
- Immediate feedback
- Ongoing analysis of data



(McDonnell, J., 1998)

**THE 7 “DEADLY SINS”**

1. Failing to Identify, Respond to and Shape Idiosyncratic Forms of Communication
2. Waiting for Readiness – “Pre” Means Never
3. Teaching Compliance vs. Communication
4. Testing not Teaching
5. Ignoring the Dangers of Yes/No
6. Complicating Communication with Motor Requirements
7. Dismissing from Related Services Due to Perceived “Lack of Progress”

**QUESTIONS?**



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