Let’s Play: Using Aided Language Stimulation to Improve Language

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Aided Language Stimulation (ALS)

A strategy in which the communication partner points out symbols on a communication display in conjunction with his or her ongoing verbal language stimulation (Goossens’, 1989).
Who Do You Use ALS With?

- Cerebral Palsy, Down Syndrome, Autism, etc.
- Receptive Language Delay
- Expressive Language Delay
- Limited-Verbal or Non-Verbal
- English Language Learners
Why Use ALS?

- Increases vocabulary comprehension
- Increases utterance length
- Decreases echolalia and increases spontaneous speech
- Decreases undesirable behaviors
- Increases use of communicative functions
- Improves syntax
- Encourages modeling of a language-rich context by communication partner
How to Make and Use ALS Displays

- Symbol and Picture Resources
- Other Materials
- Vocabulary
- Strategies
- Factors to Consider
Symbol and Picture Resources

- Boardmaker
- Google images
- Communication Displays for Engineered Preschool Environments
Other Materials

- Color printer or highlighters
- Paper, cardstock, poster board, or file folders
- Notebook
- Laminator, clear contact paper, or page protectors
Context-specific displays should consist of a robust vocabulary, allowing for a language-rich activity.

Select vocabulary based on the context

Choose common vocabulary used during the chosen context

What would other children be saying?

Core words

Not just eat, drink, and bathroom!
Vocabulary - Selection

- Semantic Categories
  - People, places, things
  - Relational words (big, little)
  - Generic verbs (give, get, make)
  - Specific verbs (eat, drink, sleep)
  - Emotional state words (happy, scared)
  - Affirmation/negation words (yes, no, not)
  - Recurrence/discontinuation words (more, all done, all gone)
  - Proper names
  - Single adjectives (hot, dirty, etc.) and their opposites later (cold, clean, etc.); Initially, not can be used with the single adjectives (not hot = cold)
  - Relevant colors
  - Relevant prepositions
## Vocabulary - Selection


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Top Words Used by Toddlers</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. A</td>
<td>9. It</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. All done/finished</td>
<td>10. Mine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Here</td>
<td>13. No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. In</td>
<td>15. On</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Is</td>
<td>16. Out</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Some</td>
<td>18. That</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. The</td>
<td>20. Want</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. What</td>
<td>22. Yes/Yeah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. You</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Vocabulary - Color Coding

- Color coding helps to visually sort the display.
- Helpful for children with cognitive impairment
- Considerations for children with visual impairments
  - Larger symbols
  - White pictures on a black display for stronger contrast
  - Lighted background
- Consider the “bigger picture”
Goossens’, Crain, & Elder Color-Coding System:

- **VERBS (Pink)** action OPEN, COME
- **DESCRIPTORS (Blue)** adjectives and adverbs PRETTY, SLOW
- **PREPOSITIONS (Green)** position words IN, OFF
- **NOUNS (Yellow)** BATH, BUBBLES
- **MISCELLANEOUS (Orange)**
  - WH-words questions WHO, WHAT, HOW
  - Exclamations, interjections UH OH, WOW
  - Negative Words negations NO, DON’T
  - Pronouns personal, possessive I, YOU
Vocabulary

- Relatively consistent placement of pictures across displays
- Consider the number of pictures on the display at once
  - Developmental level
  - Attentional level
  - Sensory Concerns
Strategies for Using ALS Displays

- Provide opportunities throughout the day for meaningful, shared communication
- “Teaching” NOT “Testing”
- Follow the 80/20 rule for natural, developmentally-appropriate conversation
- Point to key pictures/words on the display
Strategies for Using ALS Displays

- Model
- Observe
- Respond
- Scaffold
- Expand

Always see what children do as intentional and attribute meaning to it!
Adapted from Gayle Porter
Ideas for Frequently Using Displays

- Be versatile!
- Encourage siblings and peers to help.
- Have displays easily accessible throughout classroom or home.
Ideas for Frequently Using Displays
Ideas for Frequently Using Displays
References and Resources


References and Resources


- **Mayer-Johnson**
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  Suite 400
  Pittsburgh, PA 15203