PROMOTING COMMUNICATION FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH ASD

Presented by Tamara Pogin, M.A., CCC-SLP
For Autism Society of Minnesota and Minnesota Masonic Children’s Clinic for Communication Disorders
Communication Considerations
creating a framework

- Sensory
- Play
- Language
Basic Levels of Communicators

Preverbal/Early Communicators
- Sensory Play
- Use proximity, gaze, gestures, vocalizations to share intentions
- Primarily adult/child dyad

Language Combiner Communicators
- Cause and effect
- Predictable routines and phrases
- Requests and comments
- Rules based

Conversational Communicators
- Role based pretend play
- Can initiate with peers
- Back and forth exchanges on same theme
- Make plans and negotiate
Preverbal/Early Communicators

- Sensory interests
- Visual activities
- Lots of movement
- Exploratory play
- May use proximity, gaze, gestures, and vocalizations to Share intentions

- Difficulties with joint attention
- Limited gestures
- Difficulty with sustained attention
- Difficulty with shifting attention
- Little to no spontaneous language
- Needs intuitive play partner
Next steps for Preverbal/Early Communicators

- Increase Engagement and Joint Attention
- Share expressions of enjoyment and protest toward someone
- Shift attention between people and objects
  - Move together with others
  - Follow a predictable routine
- Communicate a desire to continue or end an activity
- Use more gestures and single words (verbal, picture, sign)
  - Make a choice between real objects
  - Use the same toy in a variety of ways
Communication Strategies for Preverbal/Early Communicators

- Observe your child’s sensory preferences and needs and cater activities to that
- Physical play
- Calming strategies
- Big vocal affect and facial expressions
- Limit use of objects
Communication Strategies for Preverbal/Early Communicators

- Imitate what they are doing
- Join them in their interests
- People games
- Focus on face-to-face interactions
- Be sensitive to pace of play
- Simple routines with beginning and end
Communication Strategies for Preverbal/Early Communicators

- Model gestures
- Short and simple words on repeat
- Wait expectantly
Language Combiner Communicators

- Predictable Routine
- Closed Set Routines
- Cause and Effect interests
- May see increased gestures
- Beginning words
- May see simple pretend play

• Language comprehension of complex language delayed or confused
• Difficulty with sustained attention
• Tune partner out, especially in visual and tactile activities
• May try to control all the pieces
Next Steps for Language Combiner Communicators

- Notice changes in routines and adapt
- Understand and use core set of words and phrases (100+)
- Understand and use nonverbal gestures like no, yes, point, give, and wave
- Ask for help
- Greet
- Understand and follow verbal directions
- Take turns

- Complain and protest with words
- Make a plan using words
- Have strategies to avoid meltdown when told no
- Remain calm or use calming strategies with support when unexpected things happen
- Initiate games
- Follow rule based play activities with peers
Communication Strategies for Language Combiner Communicators

- Follow the child’s lead
- Observe and interpret child’s sensory profile to guide expectations
- Incorporate movement and sensory experiences into interactions
Communication Strategies for Language Combiner Communicators

- Follow the child’s lead
- Create play sequences
- Be the giver of cool stuff
- Expectant waiting
- Clearly define roles
- Use visuals supports
- Be a player coach in a group game
Communication Strategies for Language Combiner Communicators

- Use visual supports and play models
- Expectant waiting
- Doer/Teller or Barrier games
- Give problem solving opportunities in play ("oh no, the truck is stuck")
- Begin to include emotions in your pretend play ("Yuck!" or have a puppet pretend to be scared of a toy and then happy to see another one)
- Safe emergencies - Alligator Dentist
Alligator Dentist- Safe Emergency
Conversational Communicators

- Have more complex language
- Better at predictable interactions
- Conversation skills vary
- May understand a lot of social expectations
- Understanding of basic emotions
- May have some complex pretend play if allowed to direct play

- Usually converse better on a topic of their interest
- Usually have difficulty self-monitoring
- Difficulty accessing social knowledge in the moment
- May have difficulty inferencing
- May struggle with negotiation
- Difficulty with emotion regulation due to anxiety and unpredictability
Next Steps for Conversational Communicators

- Become more aware of others and their motivations and interpret non-verbal behavior of others
- Ask and answer wh questions
- Increase their narrative language with correct sequencing and time concepts
- Give and follow directions
- To talk about past, present, and future events
- Learn how to successfully join a group
- Maintain emotional regulation when winning and losing
Next Steps for Conversational Communicators

* Negotiation and conflict resolution strategies
* Use words or other communication strategies to calm after being upset.
* Make beginning inferences
* Play successfully with peers
* Pretend play while taking on roles and having more complex story line
* Be able to switch roles in pretend play
* Pretend play with more emotional themes and fantasy themes
Communication Strategies for Conversational Communicators

- Observe and interpret child’s sensory profile to guide expectations
- Provide framework for self awareness (e.g. The Incredible 5 Point Scale, My Interoception Workbook, The Zones of Regulation, Autism Level Up)
- Consider the surroundings and if any modifications can/should be made
- Accommodate for executive functioning difficulties
- Point out people cues: body language, intonation, eye gaze, and facial expressions
Communication Strategies for Conversational Communicators

- Social Narrative
- Video modeling
- Encourage pretend play and narratives to have clear beginning, middle, and end
- Structure play by naming roles and creating group plan
- Model and explicitly teach and practice negotiation strategies
- Practice winning and losing and appropriate reactions
- Teach social thinking concepts (www.socialthinking.com)
- Find connections to people or groups with similar interests
Communication Strategies for Conversational Communicators

- Social Narrative
- Video modeling
- Expand their emotional vocabulary
- Accommodate for executive functioning difficulties
- Model and explicitly teach negotiation strategies
- Scripted improvisation
- Practice unexpected changes and use consistent vocabulary
- Explicit teaching of building blocks of conversation
- Recommend using social thinking concepts to create shared vocabulary to observe and help interpret the social world
Bibliography and Resources


