Make it Routine: Connecting Communication, Schedules, and Literacy

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Outcomes:
As a result of this activity, participants will be able to:

- list three reasons to connect literacy related experiences into the daily routines.
- identify two strategies for adding literacy skills to established routines.
- identify two strategies to select objects to represent.

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Literacy for Children with Combined Vision and Hearing Loss Website
http://literacy.nationaldb.org/

- Literacy Skills Checklist
  - available from the home page
  - appropriate for even the earliest learner
  - helps to identify where to start or go next
- “Literacy is an integrated process which develops gradually from birth and is built upon learning from broad experiences, linking language with the development of concepts, and providing exposure to the written word in a variety of meaningful contexts” (Wright, 1997)
- Language development includes listening, speaking, reading and writing.
  - That means that literacy and communication go hand in hand.
Research and Students with Multiple Disabilities

Three factors in facilitating emergent literacy of children with multiple disabilities:

- caregivers who hold high literacy expectations,
- access to a variety of communication forms, and
- regular shared storybook readings

(Koppenhaver, Erickson, Harris, McLellan, Skotko, & Newton, 2001)

Defining Literacy

literate (adj.) Having the ability to read and write; Showing skill in using words.
(Webster’s Dictionary. Landoll’s Inc., 1992)

“Words” for Students with Limited Language

- Behaviors
- Gestures
- Object symbols
- Spoken words or approximations
- Pictures
- Tactile symbols
- Print
- Static Words

*The path to literacy requires establishing communication through the child’s “words” and connecting them meaningfully to objects, events, and people.

Building Blocks for a Literacy Foundation

- Trusting Relationships
  o Keep in mind the child’s past experiences
  o Be predictable, dependable, and responsive
  o Warn when you are not going to be predictable or responsive
  o Allow the child to direct conversations about their topic
  o Expect, wait for, and acknowledge child’s responses
- Child Interests
- Communication
- Concept Development
- Exposure to Literacy
- Opportunities to observe print and Braille
- Opportunities to explore traditional and adapted writing materials
- Opportunities to “see” others reading and writing
- Make words a part of every routine and build in time for exploration

**Tangible Objects for Communication and Schedules**

The students’ skill levels in the areas of play, intentionality, symbolism, and language did not predict achievement. What did contribute to achievement was the consistent use of meaningful symbols within daily routines (Trief, Cascella, & Bruce, 2013).

**Strategies:**
- Use objects that are meaningful and directly related to activities or requests
- Avoid miniature objects
- Expect to present the object consistently and in context for several months before seeing a clear response
- Choose objects collaboratively with a team

Of course….Let’s not forget about IEP & Data Collection

- Focus goals and data on what you want to increase
  - Exploration of objects, locating object cue, initiating turn in play or conversation, recognition or anticipation, etc.
- Avoid accuracy criteria 8/10 or 80%
  - Instead take baseline data (in present levels) and set goals to increase vocabulary, forms, or functions
- Use communication matrix to monitor progress
  - [http://www.communicationmatrix.org/](http://www.communicationmatrix.org/)
    - free online assessment appropriate for very early communicators with multiple disabilities and/or sensory loss (Rowland, 2009)
    - helpful in developing present levels and goals

Additional resources and information available at:

National Center on Deaf-Blindness: Special Topics
[https://nationaldb.org/library/list/91](https://nationaldb.org/library/list/91)
References:

