The Importance of Communication

Division for Special Education Services and Supports Webinar Series Supporting Students with the Most Significant Cognitive Disabilities

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Communication

National Joint Committee for the Communication Needs of Persons With Severe Disabilities (NJC)

All people with a disability of any extent or severity have a basic right to affect, through communication, the conditions of their existence. Beyond this general right, a number of specific communication rights should be ensured in all daily interactions and interventions involving persons who have severe disabilities. To participate fully in communication interactions, each person has these fundamental communication rights:

National Joint Committee for the Communication Needs of Persons With Severe Disabilities (NJC)
COMMUNICATION BILL OF RIGHTS

1. The right to interact socially, maintain social closeness, and build relationships.
2. The right to request desired objects, actions, events, and people.
3. The right to refuse or reject undesired objects, actions, events, or choices.
4. The right to express personal preferences and feelings.
5. The right to make choices from meaningful alternatives.
6. The right to make comments and share opinions.
7. The right to ask for and give information, including information about changes in routine and environment.

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COMMUNICATION BILL OF RIGHTS

8. The right to be informed about people and events in one’s life.
9. The right to access interventions and supports that improve communication.
10. The right to have communication acts acknowledged and responded to even when the desired outcome cannot be realized.
11. The right to have access to functioning AAC (augmentative and alternative communication) and other AT (assistive technology) services and devices at all times.
12. The right to access environmental contexts, interactions, and opportunities that promote participation as full communication partners with other people, including peers.

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13. The right to be treated with dignity and addressed with respect and courtesy.
14. The right to be addressed directly and not be spoken for or talked about in the third person while present.
15. The right to have clear, meaningful, and culturally and linguistically appropriate communications.

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I have the right to...

have friends!
ask for things.
say "no"!
tell you how I feel.
tell you what I think!
take and give information.

[Communication Bill of Rights ICON link](https://www.washoeschools.net/cms/lib/NV01912265/Centricity/Domain/278/communication%20bill%20of%20rights.pdf)
Preparing Teachers to Facilitate Communication Skills in Students with Severe Disabilities

Expected Communicative Abilities

Students with severe disabilities demonstrate restricted communication abilities compared to age-matched peers,

Which does not suggest that people with severe disabilities do not communicate.

PRESUME Competence
Communication Abilities

• Students with severe disabilities can be expected to use idiosyncratic communicative forms to communicate for a variety of communicative purposes
  • body movements
  • squeals and cries
  • expressions
  • behaviors [including aberrant]

• conventional communicative forms
  • gestures
  • vocal speech-like approximations
  • gaze
  • words
  • non-speech symbols to communicate for a variety of communicative purposes
    • requesting
    • protesting
    • greeting
    • commenting

• Receptively, this population may understand multiple symbol forms and even simple grammar, or may only possess general environmental awareness (Ogletree, Bruce, Finch, Fahey, & McLean, 2011).
What is Core Vocabulary?

Core vocabulary is a statistical concept related to overall frequency of words
These are high frequency words that occur across ages, activities, topics and populations.

- 80% of the words we use are comprised of core vocabulary words
  - 78-80% of those words are from a set of 350-400 words
- 60% of the words we use are within the 100 most frequently occurring words
- 40-50% of the words we use are within the 50 most frequently occurring words
Communication Board
Color Coding Chart for AAC

- Color coding helps students find words by the category they are in and helps make the board easy to navigate by making breaks in the different areas of the board.

- Based on the Fitzgerald Key

![Image of color coding chart]

- People/Pronouns – Yellow (he, she)
- Verbs/Action Words – Green (go, want)
- Adjectives/Describing Words – Blue (big, little)
- Prepositions/Little Words/Social – Pink (on, please)
- Nouns – Orange (pretzel, truck)
- Wh- Question Words – Purple (who, what, where)
- Negation/Emergency – Red (not, don’t)
Communicating and answering Questions

Every object is discussed, experienced, then labeled .... with an ADJECTIVE or VERB to stand for the name of the thing.
Communicating
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