

Supporting Communication for Learners

who are Deaf-Blind and/or have Multiple Disabilities

	Examples	Strategies	Student Notes
BEHAVIORS Reflexive Actions Purposeful Actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Body tension & relaxation • Changes in breathing & heart rate • Facial and visual reflexes (grimace, smile, squinting, blinking) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make yourself physically available • Interpret what the child's behavior might mean • Provide feedback to let the child know that you are responding to his/her action • Use touch cues and name cues consistently 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moving toward or away from item, taking wanted item or throwing/dropping unwanted item • Intentional facial expression not directed at a person (smile, frown) • Self-injurious behaviors • Sensory-seeking behaviors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Joint attention to objects and activities • Interpret the function of the behavior • Involve yourself in the action & the action when child is involved in sensory-seeking behaviors • Consistent use of touch cues, name cues 	
COMMUNICATION VARIATIONS Unconventional Communication Variations Conventional Communication Variations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pulling hand or clothing • Vocalizing towards a person • Directed facial expression (to a person or item) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interpret the function of the unconventional communication • Model conventional gestures and shape unconventional gestures • Use hand-under-hand signing • Use concrete symbols for anticipating activities 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pointing • Shaking head yes/no • Looking back/forth between person & wanted item • Waving hi/bye 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Model increased number of conventional gestures in more activities • Provide increased exposure to accessible language (sign, speech, AAC, print/Braille) • Target specific meaningful, functional words that are throughout the day • Use concrete symbols in a calendar system to plan and review the day 	
	Concrete Symbols	Tangible Symbols, Object Cues, Photos & Drawings	
SYMBOLIC LANGUAGE Abstract Symbols Combined Symbols	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expressive or receptive use of single utterances <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spoken word or sign • Alternative & Augmentative Communication (AAC) systems • Print or Braille 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a first words inventory and share with the team • Model combinations of words many times ("more"+"drink") in targeted activities • Use concrete symbols in a calendar system to plan and review the day • Provide opportunities to practice multiple times in an activity 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two or more abstract symbols, words or signs produced together <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Examples: 'more drink', 'play finish' 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Model examples of combined symbols, in more activities and with more people • Plan activities that provide opportunities to practice combinations • Increase exposure to formalized language • Create an updated vocabulary inventory to share with the team 	
Formalized Language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two or more abstract symbols that follows grammatical rules & syntax <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spoken language • Sign Language 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teach specific grammar, syntax, and other rules of language • Provide access to fluent individuals, including peers • Target higher language goals and integrate into literacy goals • Provide constant access to language across environments 	



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