If the Book Fits, I’ll Use It!
Customizing Communication Books for Varying Physical Needs

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Learning Objectives
As a result of this activity, participants will be able to:
1. Identify the benefits of the organization of vocabulary and contents of a communication book
2. Gain ideas on ways in which to enhance communication books so that they are easy to use, efficient and support language across multiple contexts.
3. Discover ways in which to customize communication books to support children with varying physical needs

Overview
• Who we are
  – Communication and Writing Aids Service
• Description of clients
• Overview of communication book features specific to 3 populations:
  – Children who are direct accessors
  – Children who communicate with partner-assisted (auditory) scanning
  – Children who are Blind or partially sighted
• Explore tool kit used for assessment and demonstration

Who We Are
Communication and Writing Aids Service
• Community Program at Holland Bloorview Kids Rehabilitation Hospital (Toronto, Ontario, Canada)
• Consultative service for children ages 0-18
• One of the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long Term Care’s, Assistive Devices Program communication clinics
• Expanded Level AAC Clinic
• Interdisciplinary teams

Who We Support
• Clients with complex clinical/technological needs requiring alternate access; integration of systems
• Ambulatory and non-ambulatory
• Limited to or no reliable access method
• Multiple diagnoses (can include hearing and vision challenges)
• Range of abilities and needs

What are Communication Books?
• Structured and personalized book with text, photos, pictures and/or symbols
• Provide efficient, cost effective, portable and flexible system of access to vocabulary and language in multiple contexts
• Allow access to vocabulary based on user’s physical, visual and auditory needs
• Provide back-up to technology
What are Communication Books?

- Come in many different styles and sizes
- Require ‘customizations’ to include vocabulary relevant to the user

Presentation and Access to Vocabulary

- Support language learning and literacy
- Promote and enhance functional communication
- Presented left to right (subject-verb-object) English word order

Communication Book Features

- Front cover
  - Identifies the individual

- Instructions
  - Clear and concise instructions on how individual communicates
  - Pictures to depict features of book and/or representation of how the user responds

- Organized in categories and subcategories
- Include variety of vocabulary components and communicative functions

- Pictures/photos/symbols/text
- May be colour-coded (i.e., Fitzgerald Key)
- Includes alphabet and numbers
Laurel’s Laws

1. When I am using my communication book, please read the items aloud when I point to them.
2. Please make sure my book is available to me so that I can use it when I need it.
3. Do not touch my communication book without my permission!
4. Do not guess what I am saying with my communication book. Give me time to tell you my message.
5. When I am using my letterboard, if you know the word I am spelling, please say it aloud. I will tell you no if you are wrong or go on to the next word if you are right.
6. Please be patient.

Communication Book Features

- Table of contents
  - Supports the user in navigating to a specific page
- Directory
  - Assists the partner in locating vocabulary quickly (e.g., for modeling opportunities)

Communication Book Features

- Personal Communication Passports (developed by Sally Millar in 1991 alongside a similar approach called ‘Client Books’)
  - Organizational method of recording important information about an individual
  - Used to:
    - Share information
    - Identify needs
    - Support transitions (new classrooms, camps, etc.)

Communication Book Features

- Tabs
  - Eating and Drinking
  - Food
  - Please refer to tab 1 ‘be safe

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Communication Book Features

- Presentation and Storage of Vocabulary
  - Home-school sharing/news

Presentation and Storage of Vocabulary

- Size and thickness of book
  - Horizontal or vertical orientation

Presentation and Storage of Vocabulary

- Ease of updating materials
  - Dry Erase Marker
  - Laminate

Presentation and Storage of Vocabulary

- Please add vocabulary to my book
  - Please write words here that need to be added to my communication book.

Presentation and Storage of Vocabulary

- Binder with flap to protect tabs
  - Carrying strap or case/bag
  - Walker with basket

Communication Books in More Detail

- Sighted & Tactile
  - Blind or Partially Sighted A Tactile Items

Direct Accessors

- Communicate with Partner
  - Assisted Scanning (Visual &/or Auditory)

Communication Book
**Direct Accessors**

- Weight/size
- Growth of vocabulary
- Categorization of tabs
- Core flap
- Durability

**Partner-Assisted (Auditory) Scanning**

- Detailed instructions
- Identification and description of response signal and processing time
- Table of contents with links via numeric tabs
- Lists
  - Present only 4 items at a time when using lists
  - Book List
  - Table List
  - Chart List
  - Graph List
  - Sound List
  - Visual List
- Communication passport with links via alpha tabs

**Partner-Assisted Auditory Scanning**

- Auditory and visual scanning
  - Row/column
  - Left/right or top/bottom + row/column

**Blind or Partially Sighted and Tactile Input**

- Input from vision itinerant teacher, vision rehabilitation worker, functional vision assessment
- Size of items
- Background colour
- Spacing between items
- Type of image/symbol
- Location in space with which the visual field is supported

**Blind or Partially Sighted and Tactile Input**

- Size of displays = standard Braille paper
- Texas School for the Blind symbol set
  - Shape
  - Texture
  - Object
- Braille
- Text
Ideas to Consider

- Clear concise instructions and indication of response
- Vocabulary collection sheets
- Easily accessible (pockets, baskets, mounting, should strap)
- Protection for tabs

Sample and Assessment Kit

- Means to trial and demonstrate materials
- Includes variety of communication book layouts and styles
- Vocabulary available interacts with 3 stories for structured activities
- Items include display of maximum vocabulary available

Questions

Thank You

References