

What's in Your Therapy Bag?

Using everyday materials to support language and literacy learning for students who use AAC

DynaVox V and Vmax
Ideas for Successful Use in the Classroom

Issue 8, December 2009

With limited school budgets and little or no time to create materials, you may be constantly looking for new and creative ways to provide fun and interactive learning activities for students with significant speech and language disabilities. With a computer, Boardmaker software, the content found within InterAACT and a little creativity, you might find that you have everything you need to provide language-rich activities for your students.



TIP 1 - USE FREE ONLINE RESOURCES

DynaVox Mayer-Johnson offers many free on-line resources that will support speech/language intervention and classroom instruction. Lesson plans, implementation strategy videos and thousands of pre-made Boardmaker boards are just a click away.

Implementation Toolkit

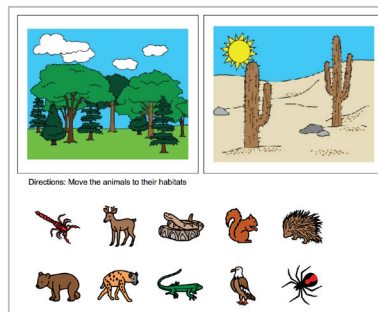
The Implementation Toolkit is a collection of video and print-based resources created to help you facilitate successful use of DynaVox devices in the classroom, community and home. On the Toolkit, you will find printable lesson plans, videos, handouts and worksheets that will help you and your team support communication and learning for all students who use AAC.



Example: Communication Partner Preparation – Choosing Activities for Implementation Handout (found on the Implementation Toolkit)



AdaptedLearning.com combines file sharing, powerful search capabilities, implementation articles, open discussion forums, and community functions. You can search for activity and communication boards specific to a desired topic (ex. animals) or share what you have created with others. Simply download the boards you like and open them with your Boardmaker software. Use them as they are or modify them to meet your needs.



Example: Habitat Sort (found on AdaptedLearning.com)

TIP 2 - USE FLASHCARDS, BOOKS, MAGAZINES AND PHOTOGRAPHS TO ENCOURAGE GUIDED EXPLORATION OF THE AAC DEVICE.

In order for these activities to be successful, make sure that you know where the target vocabulary is located on the device before you initiate guided exploration activities. Always remember that you can't model efficient use of the device unless you know how to navigate through the content.

The main goal of exploration activities is to provide your students with semi-structured time to interact with the vocabulary and messages that are pre-stored in their AAC device. These are child-driven exercises and there is no such thing as a wrong answer. If you are new with the device, use these opportunities to learn *with* your student. Pay close attention. Your student might be able to teach you a thing or two!



HINT

If you have Boardmaker, use the MJ Long Wallet 2 Inch Vertical 1 x 3 template to make your own flashcards!

Idea A - Vocabulary Scavenger Hunt

Choose a book or magazine with language-rich pictures and text. Use a marker, Post-it note or sticker to highlight target vocabulary on the pages. Spend some time looking through the book or magazine with your student and use the device to make comments, answer questions or discuss people and things.



HINT

For a little added fun use the fingerprint PCS symbol to mark "clues" throughout a book or magazine. Use a real magnifying glass to search for clues and write them in a special "detective" notebook. Discuss clues and try to solve the mystery.



HINT

Find an interesting picture (or have the student bring one from home) and hunt for interesting things in the picture. Use the device to talk about, describe, and comment on the items found in the picture.

Idea B - What's in the Bag?

Place several picture cards (or objects) in a bag and have the student pull out one at a time. Depending on their language level, have them:

- Find the word on their device.
- Use the vocabulary on their device to describe the item.
- Answer a wh-question about the item.
- Place the item in a category. (ex. My Words)
- Create a sentence using the item. (ex. Gateway or Core words)
- Spell the item. (ex. Keyboard)



HINT

For step-by-step instructions for printing from your device, go to the Knowledge Base and type in keyword "print." To access the Knowledge Base go to <http://www.dynavoxtech.com/Support/search.aspx>

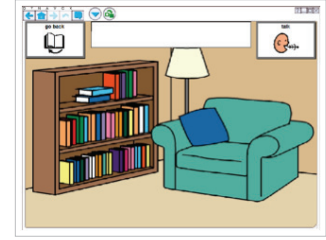


HINT

This is a great way to explore the My Words (V/Vmax), Vocabulary Lists (Xpress) and Lists (Tango) component of your device. For more information about My Words, review the lesson plans and introduction video on the Implementation Toolkit.

My Words Lesson Plans: <http://www.dynavoxtech.com/training/toolkit/details.aspx?id=360>

My Words Intro Video: <http://www.dynavoxtech.com/training/toolkit/details.aspx?id=359>



Encourage reading at home. Let your parents know that there is also a book reading page for home.



HINT

For students with physical disabilities who are unable to grasp items, use a switch activated spinner so that they can randomly choose items to talk about.



HINT

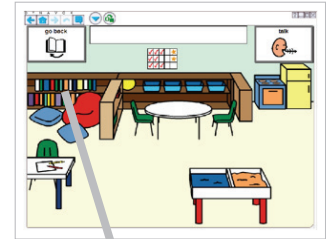
If you are providing treatment to improve articulation of specific sounds, make sure that you fill the bag with items that will allow your student to practice these sounds in addition to exploring their device. Keep in mind that the voice output from an AAC device can provide a consistent speech model for those individuals with articulation disorders.

TIP 3 - READ A BOOK.

Did you know that typically developing children from literate households have heard their favorite stories 200-400 times (Adams, 1990)? Books can provide the perfect backdrop for providing rich language experiences for your students. Let them use the device to choose their favorite story, make comments (ex. Let me see.), answer comprehension questions (ex. Was this story about a boy, dog or fishing?) and retell the sequence of a story.

Make sure that you ...

- Choose books with rhythm and repeated lines. Go to www.aacintervention.com/repeatl.htm to find a list of books with repeated lines.
- Select books with language-rich graphics.
- Give many opportunities to explore new vocabulary learning during book reading activities.
- Review the vocabulary location on the device prior to the activity so that you can model appropriate use.
- Use the language that is already in the communication system! Don't spend too much time programming pages that are specific to a story. Teach your students to generalize the vocabulary that is already available.



Find the book reading area in the Young Child User Classroom.

Idea C - Category Roundup

Choose 2 to 4 categories (ex. food, clothing, animals, transportation, body parts, etc.) and create picture cards of items found in each category. Print the corresponding background for the category (ex. kitchen, closet, barn, etc.). Have your student match the object to the most appropriate category using the device and picture cards.



TIP 4 - PLAY A GAME TO REINFORCE LANGUAGE CONCEPTS AND VOCABULARY USE.

You can play all of the games listed below with the vocabulary already programmed into your student's device. Go to the Page Navigator and type in the Search word "games" to access the games pages. For word games, use the My Words (V/Vmax), Vocabulary Lists (Xpress) or Lists (Tango) pages.



- Go Fish
- Boggle Jr.
- Candyland
- Hi Ho Cherry-O
- Simon Says
- Pictionary
- Scattergories
- Taboo
- Mad Libs

TIP 5 - GO ON AN ADVENTURE!

It is often a challenge to give our students all of the rich language experiences that they need in the confines of a therapy room. Get creative and bring these experiences to your students!



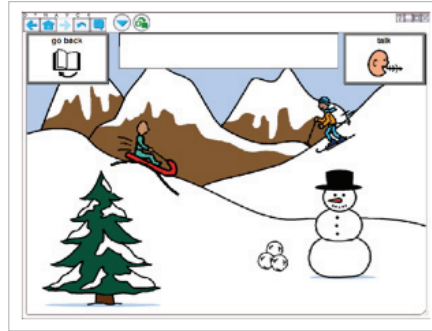
Example: Camping Adventure

MATERIALS NEEDED

- Small Tent
- Sleeping Bag
- Cooler
- Marshmallows
- Electric fan and water bottle (to make a rain storm)

SUPPLEMENTAL READING ACTIVITY

The Berenstain Bears Go to Camp by Stan and Jan Berenstain.



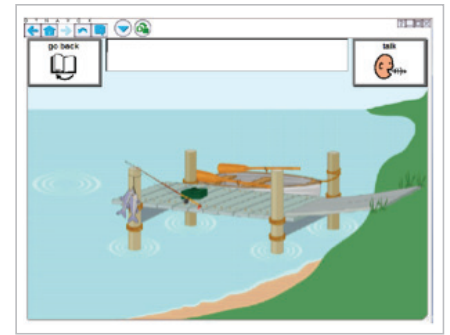
Example: Wintertime

MATERIALS NEEDED

- Winter clothing (hats, scarves, mittens, etc.) for sorting
- Summer clothing (shorts, bathing suit, flip flops, etc.) for sorting
- Shaved ice for snow

SUPPLEMENTAL READING ACTIVITY

The Mitten by Jan Brett, There Was a Cold Lady by Lucille Colandro, Hello Snow by Hope Vestergaard



Example: Let's Go Fishing!

MATERIALS NEEDED

- Fishing Pole
- Tackle Box
- Paper Fish
- Goldfish Crackers
- Symbols (target vocabulary) to place on fish

SUPPLEMENTAL READING ACTIVITY

Fishing In A Brook (Activities for Kids), by Fran Lee.

References:

Adams, M. J. (1990). Beginning to Read: Thinking and Learning about Print. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.