

Assistive Technology For Communication

Your speech/language pathologist is the person you need to consult if you feel your student is speech/language impaired. That being said:

“Wait!!” you say. “Assistive Technology for Communication???” Let me explain.

This is in addition to what your speech/language therapist does for you or for the students they serve as communication impaired students. However, this is also what you can do to help **EVERY** student in your class who struggles to get the words out. You will find that even your best classroom talker has bad communication days. When a person is tired, emotionally charged (either positively or negatively), unsure, or not attending, they will suddenly be at a loss for words even when that is not the norm. What is suggested here will certainly help the students in your classroom who are speech/language impaired but in addition it will help all of you when you have those “moments”.

A great way for students to **learn vocabulary** is through highly scripted activities such as

- stories that have repetitive phrases or words
- re-use vocabulary as often as possible from week to week
- use the same vocabulary words across environments
- attach pictures or symbols to vocabulary words as often as possible
- provide a “purpose” for the new vocabulary you are introducing
- perhaps pair the vocabulary with a physical response or prompt

To help students say what they **need to say when they are emotionally charged**:

- Have pictures available that represent “feelings” or “actions”
- Wait patiently for the students to give their message
- Don’t steal their messages by saying words or finishing their sentences
- Allow gesturing or pantomiming when they can’t say the word or sentence
- If students are really struggling, perhaps asking some simple “yes” “no” questions will get them started. “Is this about.....?”

When **grammar** is the issue and students use poor grammar you can

- Provide visual supports for the various parts of speech through color coded words
- Model good grammar without correcting the student
 - Student: “That guy comed through the woods.”
 - Teacher: “Yes, the man came through the woods.”
- Use music to help teach grammar either by playing something softly in the background or by teaching a song to help the students learn the grammar rules.

Let the student practice the different ways to communicate messages by

- **Placing the student in the role or conveyer of information**
 - Help them tell jokes to the classroom
 - Give directions for a specific task
- **Disguise a Request for Information by Specifying the Reason**
 - Have the students do interviews to find out information about other students or professionals in the classroom
 - Have the student tell about a book (book report) to a YOUNGER child.
 - Play word games such as “I Spy”
- **Arrange Situations in Which Objects, Actions or Information is Needed**
 - Barrier Games (putting up a barrier between two children and they must describe to the other something specific about their picture or object so the child on the other side of the barrier is able to figure out what is being requested without peeking around the barrier)
 - Missing Items, Assistance or Directions (you’ve been working on colors but now you ask the student for the “red one” but you don’t specify what red item you are talking about. The student must ask you questions to determine what it is you are wanting.

Cultivating a good social community in your room will also help students who struggle to express themselves verbally. It is vital that they see the conversational modeling and participate in a conversation every day. Teach conversational skills by helping your class to use turn taking strategies. There are three different kinds of turn taking.

1. Enhanced Turn Taking

- a. Try some sequenced scripts so that the students practice saying one thing and then it is another student’s turn to say something. We are setting up the turn taking model ourselves.

2. Obligatory Turn Taking

- a. The person is asked a direct question such as “What is your name?” A specific response is required.

3. Non Obligatory Turn Taking

- a. That is when a student makes a comment in response to something that is said. An example is “I went to Disneyland on our spring vacation!” to which a student in the conversational group says, “Cool. I went there last year.” It is a way to keep the conversation going and showing interest in what the first child said.

These are only a few suggestions for helping your students to “use their words”. Please contact your building speech/language pathologist for refining these suggestions for specific students who are speech/language impaired.

Websites to check out:

Grammar:

<http://www.dailygrammar.com/archive.shtml>

<http://www.englishgrammarconnection.com/lessonstart.php>

I played with this one. Need good readers and probably not for those below the 4th grade.

Vocabulary Building

<http://www.quia.com/pages/worldowords.html>

word associations, categories, fill in the blanks...very fun

Barrier Game Ideas

<http://www.commtap.org/generalresources/englishlev1/AR%20E%20ideas%20for%20barrier%20games.doc>

Picture Symbols

Use Google pictures or any other free website for searching for suitable pictures.

Conversational Turn Taking

Use scripts from your reading books, fiction and non fiction books for scripted conversations.

Talk with your building speech/language therapist about ideas for obligatory and non obligatory conversational turn taking if you are unsure of what you can do for your students.

These websites are provided as information only. Assistive Technology is an IEP process which is a team decision. If something here makes you think that a student may benefit from the product or website, please go to the IEP team with your thoughts before implementing. Although I reviewed all the websites prior to posting here, please understand that links are often changed without notice. If something here no longer applies, please contact pkeeling@ccusd93.org and advise her that the website no longer reflects the topic being considered.