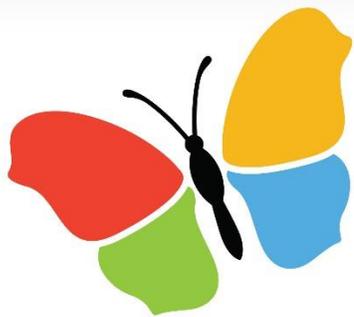


Learning
Guide



Take **Flight**

Empowering educators and
equipping learners with ASD to soar



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The Emerging
Communicator

The Emerging Communicator

When working with a learner with ASD who has communication challenges, it is important to consult with a Speech Language Pathologist. These professionals have specific training and expertise in communication disorders and intervention.

Speech Language Pathologists may provide support by assessing communication skills and making recommendations about skills to address and how they can be taught. They may also identify appropriate modes of communication and any augmentative communication systems that may be beneficial.

Capitalizing on Motivation

When beginning to teach communication skills to emerging communicators, using their interests/motivation is the most effective strategy.

- Making requests for things the learner wants is the only type of communication that directly benefits the learner.
- Motivation and reinforcement, two essential components for teaching communication skills, are automatically built into the interaction.
- Depending on the learner's skills, they may make requests using speech, sign, gestures, pictures, an augmentative communication system, or a combination of communication systems.
- A preference assessment can help you figure out what the learner's most highly-preferred items and activities are; in other words, what are their most valuable reinforcers?
- It is also important to think about WHEN the learner's motivation for a particular item will be strong.
- It may be helpful to increase motivation for a particular item or activity by "enticing" the learner and reminding them how much fun something is or how much they typically enjoy it.



Defining the Behaviour

It is important to think about, and clearly define, the type of request that will be reinforced.

- In the early stages of teaching, it is important to accept, encourage, and reinforce a response that is easy for the learner.
- In the early stages, every communicative attempt by the learner should result in the immediate delivery of the requested item every time.
- Over time, as the learner's communication increases, you can start to slowly expect more complex requests.
- Over time, as learner skills increase, it is also important to help them understand and accept that they can't necessarily have everything they request immediately every time they ask for it.

Where and When to Work on Communication

Think about how to embed as many opportunities as possible for the learner to make requests throughout the day and in every setting

- What are the activities and tasks that the learner engages in each day and in every environment? Each one represents several communication opportunities.
- Some opportunities for requesting may emerge naturally within the activities; at other times you may have to strategically arrange opportunities.
- The more opportunities throughout the day, the better.
- The only way to build new skills to the point that they become fluent and last over time is to practice, practice, practice.





The Autism in Education (AIE) Partnership is an inter-provincial collaboration of the Departments of Education & Early Childhood Development / Early Learning & Culture of the four Atlantic Provinces. Created as an initiative of the Atlantic Provinces Special Education Authority (APSEA) in 2010, the AIE Partnership provides support to educational personnel working with students with ASD across the Atlantic region and facilitates the sharing of information and expertise among stakeholders. Priorities of the AIE Partnership include:

- Research to clarify and articulate standards of practice in the area of Autism Spectrum Disorder
- Dissemination of information and current research on issues of concern among the four Atlantic Provinces
- Professional development and learning opportunities for educational staff, partner professionals, and families



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