

*Communication Supports Tool:  
A Tool to Initiate Team Information Gathering and Planning for Implementation*

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**Team:**

**Student** \_\_\_\_\_

**Family member(s)** \_\_\_\_\_

**SLP** \_\_\_\_\_

**Teacher** \_\_\_\_\_

**OT** \_\_\_\_\_

**PT** \_\_\_\_\_

**Social Worker** \_\_\_\_\_

**School Psychologist** \_\_\_\_\_

**Other** \_\_\_\_\_

# I. Does our student's communication need more support?

Determine why and how our student communicates.

Which of these communication functions are present, emerging or not present?

<b>Request</b>	<b>Agree/Refuse</b>	<b>Gain Attention</b>	<b>Give Information</b>	<b>Express Opinions/ Comment</b>	<b>Seek Information</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Points to a cup and says "juice"</li> <li>"I want cookie"</li> <li>"pulls teacher to computer"</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>nods head "yes"</li> <li>pushes juice away</li> <li>"no"</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>taps teacher on the shoulder</li> <li>"mom"</li> <li>social greeting "hi"</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>"I watched TV last night"</li> <li>"Daddy sick"</li> <li>thumbs up or thumbs down</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>"that's yucky"</li> <li>"I like that"</li> <li>facial expression</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>"Where ball?"</li> <li>"What's that?"</li> <li>Shoulder shrug and point</li> </ul>
<b>Check One:</b> Function Present Function Emerging Function Not Present	<b>Check One:</b> Function Present Function Emerging Function Not Present	<b>Check One:</b> Function Present Function Emerging Function Not Present	<b>Check One:</b> Function Present Function Emerging Function Not Present	<b>Check One:</b> Function Present Function Emerging Function Not Present	<b>Check One:</b> Function Present Function Emerging Function Not Present
<b>What does it look like?</b> Body Language/Gesture Augmentative Alternative Communication (low/high tech) or Sign Language Verbal Speech Vocalizations (sounds, grunting) Other Behavior (e.g. acting out, shutting down):	<b>What does it look like?</b> Body Language/Gesture Augmentative Alternative Communication (low/high tech) or Sign Language Verbal Speech Vocalizations (sounds, grunting) Other Behavior (e.g. acting out, shutting down):	<b>What does it look like?</b> Body Language/Gesture Augmentative Alternative Communication (low/high tech) or Sign Language Verbal Speech Vocalizations (sounds, grunting) Other Behavior (e.g. acting out, shutting down):	<b>What does it look like?</b> Body Language/Gesture Augmentative Alternative Communication (low/high tech) or Sign Language Verbal Speech Vocalizations (sounds, grunting) Other Behavior (e.g. acting out, shutting down):	<b>What does it look like?</b> Body Language/Gesture Augmentative Alternative Communication (low/high tech) or Sign Language Verbal Speech Vocalizations (sounds, grunting) Other Behavior (e.g. acting out, shutting down):	<b>What does it look like?</b> Body Language/Gesture Augmentative Alternative Communication (low/high tech) or Sign Language Verbal Speech Vocalizations (sounds, grunting) Other Behavior (e.g. acting out, shutting down):

Are all the above functions marked as present? (Circle One) Yes No



Does the student communicate in multiple environments with multiple people? (Circle One) Yes No



Does the student consistently communicate in an appropriate way that is clear to familiar and unfamiliar listeners?  
(Circle One) Yes No

*Example of communicative mode that is not understood by all and inappropriate: Student throws an empty cup on the floor to communicate "I want a drink."*



Does the student communicate with equal success in stressful and non-stressful situations? (Circle One) Yes No

*Student requests food using words during daily snack time. During school assemblies or field trips, the student begins to cry and refuses to complete activities when hungry. (daily snack time is a non-stressful situation because it is routine whereas school assemblies/field trips can be stressful because they are not daily routine)*

Does our student independently initiate communication across situations? (Circle One) Yes No



**Does our student's communication need more support? (Circle One) Yes No**

If you answered *No* to any of the questions in section 1, the student's communication needs more support.

## II. What do we know about our student?

Record review and collaboration for feature matching

### Individual preferences and culture

What individual preferences, social considerations or values held by our student might impact the selection of a specific system?

### Environment

Environment may impact:

**Message Output** - Consider volume needed to participate in the environment.

**Message Characteristics** - Consider quick access phrases versus words or spelling for spontaneous utterance generation.

**Portability and Placement** - Consider how mobile the device needs to be versus mounted to a tray, table or chair.

List the environments that our student is in throughout the day. List any additional information that needs to be gathered.

*Collaboration Opportunity:* Who can I ask for more information?

## Speech and Language

Speech and Language may impact:

**Message Output** - Consider the student's need to know that the item they intended has been selected. Consider the student's need to hear the message modeled for their own language development. Consider student's opportunity for language development and growth.

**Message Characteristics** – Consider if the student is spelling, reading or showing interest in letters or written word. Consider student's opportunity for language development and growth.

**Icon Type** - Consider the student's accuracy and familiarity with types of icons in the daily environment.

**Vocabulary Organization** - Consider if the *student understands categories, function and attributes of objects in their environment*. Consider if the student has shown better memory and comprehension when information is presented in the same order each time.

List any considerations about our student's speech and language throughout environments. List any additional information that needs to be gathered.

*Collaboration Opportunity:* Who can I ask for more information?

## Hearing

This information may impact:

**Message Output** - Consider volume needed for auditory feedback and to participate in the environment.

List considerations about the student's hearing including if *the student has a known condition that may cause hearing skills to change over time.*

List any additional information that needs to be gathered.

*Collaboration Opportunity:* Who can I ask for more information?

## Vision

This information may impact:

**Message Output** - Consider student's need for auditory feedback when selecting an icon for message accuracy.

**Message Characteristics** - Consider quick access phrases versus words or spelling for spontaneous utterance generation.

**Portability and Placement** - Consider placement of device in relation to student's visual needs and strengths.

**Icon Type** - Consider type of icon to best meet student's visual needs and strengths. Consider needs for materials with high visual contrast, glare of lamination, background clutter and icon type.

**Icon Quantity** - Consider if the student has a field of vision loss. Consider number of icons in relation to student's visual tracking needs or strengths.

**Icon Size** - Consider if the student needs magnified materials.

**Vocabulary Organization** - Consider how vocabulary is organized in relation to student's visual motor planning. Consider the number of times the student will need to hit the device to get to targeted vocabulary.

List considerations about the student's vision including if *the student has a known condition that may cause visual skills to change over time.*

List any additional information that needs to be gathered.

*Collaboration Opportunity:* Who can I ask for more information?

## Sensory, Restricted Interests

### Sensory information may impact:

**Access** - Consider tactile/visual preferences and aversions that may impact ability to select an icon.

**Message Output** - Consider auditory preferences and aversions such as synthesized vs. recorded speech and/or volume.

**Portability and Placement** - Consider student's visual preferences (i.e. prefers using peripheral vision), tactile preferences such as weight or material of case.

**Icon Quantity** - Consider the amount of visual stimuli on page.

**Vocabulary Organization** - Consider if the student has a strong need for predictability or sameness or aversion to changes in the vocabulary display.

List sensory preferences and aversions (*consider visual, auditory, tactile*). List any additional information that needs to be gathered.

*Collaboration Opportunity:* Who can I ask for more information?



## Motor

Motor information may impact:

**Access** – Consider the student’s level of fatigue. Consider if the *student has voluntary control (i.e. hand, finger, toe, head, arm, leg, etc.) in order to independently select an icon or access a switch?*

**Message Characteristics** - Consider quick access phrases versus words or spelling for spontaneous utterance generation.

**Portability and Placement** - Consider if the student has a dominant motor side. Consider how mobile the device needs to be versus mounted. Consider placement of communication system for independent and easy access. Consider weight and/or size of device for student to transport communication system.

**Icon Quantity** - Consider number of icons student can accurately select with targeted access method.

**Icon Size** - Consider size of icon student can accurately select with targeted access method.

**Vocabulary Organization** - Consider the number of times the student must hit device to get to targeted vocabulary in relation to motor skills and level of fatigue.

List any considerations about the student’s gross and fine motor abilities (*strengths and challenges including if the student has a known condition that may cause motor skills to deteriorate*). List any additional information that needs to be gathered.

*Collaboration Opportunity:* Who can I ask for more information?

## Mobility and Positioning

This information may impact:

**Portability and Placement** - Consider how mobile the device needs to be and if mounts will impact the student's ability to travel through the environment. Consider the ability of the student to transition with a device independently. Consider all mobility or positioning equipment used by the student.

List any considerations about the student's mobility and positioning throughout environments (including if *the student has a known condition that may cause mobility skills to change over time*). List any additional information that needs to be gathered.

*Collaboration Opportunity:* Who can I ask for more information?

### III. What features and supports/systems should we consider?

#### Determine needed features

Adapted from Jill E Senner, PhD, CCC-SLP [www.talcaac.com](http://www.talcaac.com)  
 (Refer to section II. as you make your selections.)

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Access</b></p> <p><b>How will my student <u>access</u> communication?</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Direct Selection</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;"><input type="checkbox"/> Finger, Hand or Toe</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;"><input type="checkbox"/> Keyguard</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;"><input type="checkbox"/> Pointer</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Switch Control (head, arm, leg)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Eye Gaze</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Scanning</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Other:</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Message Output</b></p> <p><b>How will the <u>message output</u> be expressed?</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Voice Output (device generated or recorded speech)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Visual Display (e.g. objects, words, pictures)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Other:</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Message Characteristics</b></p> <p><b>What <u>message characteristics</u> will be displayed? (Check all that apply)</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Complete Sentences</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Phrases</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Words</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Letters for Spelling</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Other:</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Portability and Placement</b></p> <p><b>How will the student <u>transport</u> the communication system?</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Carrying strap      Size: _____</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Carrying case      Weight: ____</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Mount</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;"><input type="checkbox"/> Wheelchair</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;"><input type="checkbox"/> Desktop</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Other:</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Icon Type</b></p> <p><b>What <u>type of icon</u> will be displayed?</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Objects                      <input type="checkbox"/> Symbols</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Tactile Symbols      <input type="checkbox"/> Boardmaker</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Photographs              <input type="checkbox"/> Symbol Stix</p> <p style="padding-left: 100px;"><input type="checkbox"/> Pixon</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Other:</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Icon Quantity</b></p> <p><b>How <u>many icons</u> will be displayed?</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 1                      <input type="checkbox"/> 16</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 2                      <input type="checkbox"/> 32</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 3                      <input type="checkbox"/> 64</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 4                      <input type="checkbox"/> 128</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Other:</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Icon Size</b></p> <p><b>What <u>icon size</u> is recommended?</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> ½ inch</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 1 inch</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 2 inches</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 3 inches</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 4 inches</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Other:</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Vocabulary Organization</b></p> <p><b>How will <u>vocabulary</u> be organized?</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Stationary vocabulary for motor planning/memory</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Category</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Activity-Based</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Masking (option to hide icons)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Other:</p>

## Match possible supports/systems to needed features

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 SETT forms and additional resources are available for download at <http://www.joyzabala.com>.

**STEP 1: Based on the information above, enter features needed by the student across the shaded top row - 1 feature per column**

**STEP 2: Enter promising tools in the shaded left column - 1 tool per row**

**STEP 3: For each tool, note matches with descriptors and functions to help guide discussion of devices and services**

**USE ADDITIONAL SHEETS IF NECESSARY**

Features identified by the team <div style="text-align: right;">→</div> Supports/ Systems we are considering (Consider at least 3) <div style="text-align: left;">↓</div>								
1.								
2.								
3.								

## **IV. How do we implement our student's communication support/system?**

**Consider student strengths. Explore activities in which student is more likely to be successful.**

List the times of the day or activities when our student is most likely to attempt communication.

At home:

In the community:

At school:

List people that our student is more likely to communicate with.

At home:

In the community:

At school:

List student preferred activities, interests and/or items.

At home:

In the community:

At school:

List the time of day or activity in which the student would most benefit from improved communication.

At home:

In the community:

At school:

**Look at the answers above and determine activities in which our student would most likely be successful and engaged:**

**Determine which communication functions to start with in the activities you determined most likely to be successful and engaging.**

Which communication function(s) will have the greatest impact on helping our student communicate more independently and effectively in the selected activities?

- Request    Agree/Refuse    Gain Attention    Give Information    Comment/Express Opinion    Seek Information

Which communication function(s) are emerging within the selected activities? (Emerging skills are those that are becoming apparent but not yet mastered.)

- Request    Agree/Refuse    Gain Attention    Give Information    Comment/Express Opinion    Seek Information

Which communication function(s) occur most frequently for peers during the selected activities?

- Request    Agree/Refuse    Gain Attention    Give Information    Comment/Express Opinion    Seek Information

**Look at the answers above and determine the communication function(s) that the team wishes to target first**  
(Professional Judgement may be needed to select a communication function):

**How are peers demonstrating the targeted communication function(s) in this environment?**

**Determine key vocabulary words to consider for our student.**

**Core words:**  
(set of words typically used in 80% of daily communication)

**Fringe words:**  
(words specific to an activity and used less frequently)

**Personal Fringe words:**  
(words specific to the student such as preferred items and family members)

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## V. Bringing it all together

### Embed communication throughout the day

Adapted from the Comprehensive Autism Planning System (CAPS) [Shawn A. Henry](#) (Author), [PhD Brenda Smith Myles](#) (Author)

Time	Activity	Target <u>Communication functions</u> I can model	Targeted <u>vocabulary</u> I can model	Communication supports/system needed for this activity	Communication Partners	Communication partner expectations	Student Expectation for this activity	Data Collection
		Request Agree/Refuse Gain Attention Give info/ comment Express Opinion Seek Information						
		Request Agree/Refuse Gain Attention Give info/ comment Express Opinion Seek Information						
		Request Agree/Refuse Gain Attention Give info/ comment Express Opinion Seek Information						



Time	Activity	Target <u>Communication functions</u> I can model	Targeted <u>vocabulary</u> I can model	Communication supports	Communication Partners	Communication partner expectations	Student Expectation for this activity	Data Collection
		Request Agree/Refuse Gain Attention Give info/ comment Express Opinion Seek Information						
		Request Agree/Refuse Gain Attention Give info/ comment Express Opinion Seek Information						
		Request Agree/Refuse Gain Attention Give info/ comment Express Opinion Seek Information						
		Request Agree/Refuse Gain Attention Give info/ comment Express Opinion Seek Information						

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