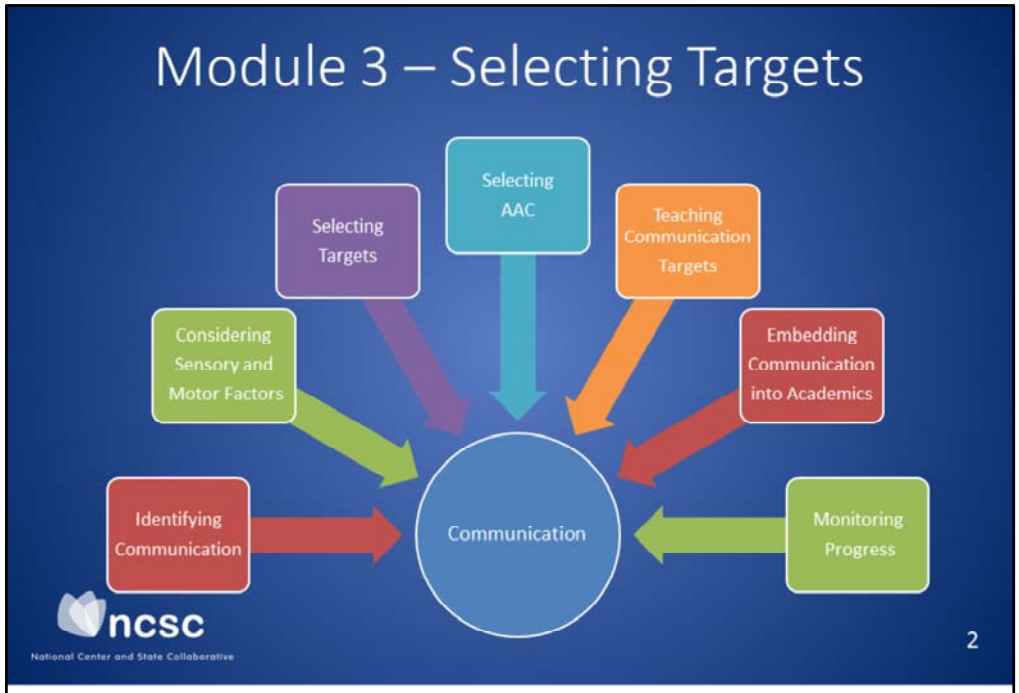
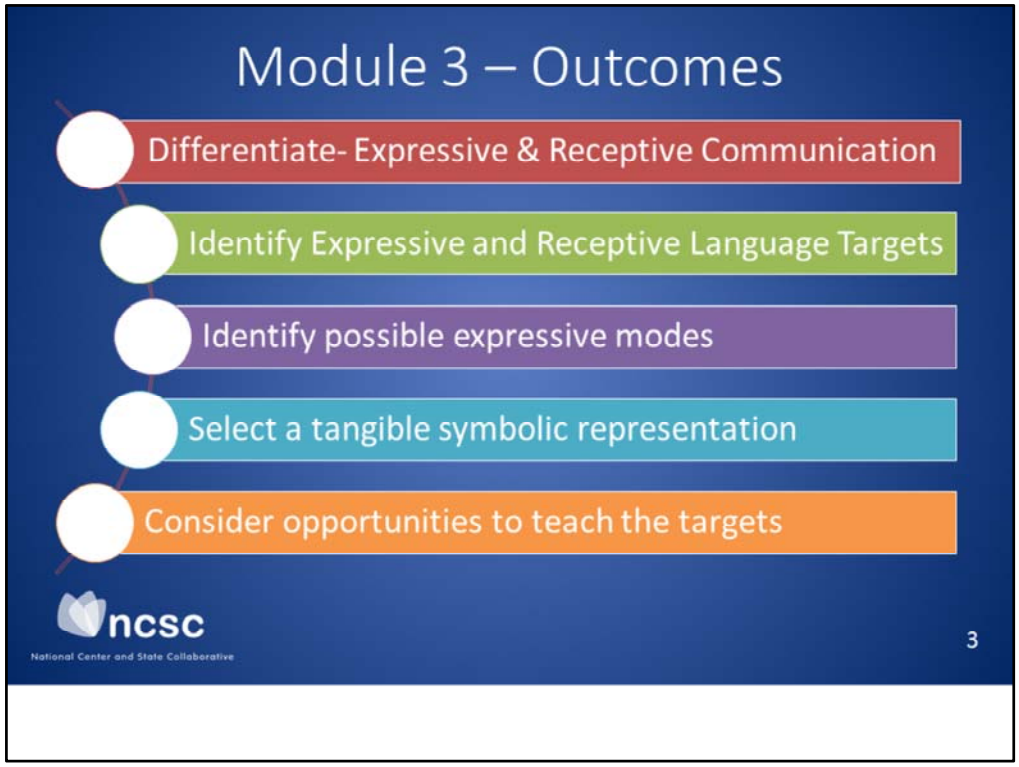
Welcome to the NCSC Communication Tool Kit! This series of professional development modules focuses primarily on the basic elements of supporting communication and language development in students who do not use oral speech and who also may have an intellectual disability. Not only is communication an essential building block for the development of language REQUIRED for access to the general curriculum, communication is an essential life skill. Student health and safety depends on the extent to which *students* have regularized gestures, symbols, and augmented *or alternative* forms *of communication*. Now more than ever before, technological enhancements make the goal of communication and language development achievable.



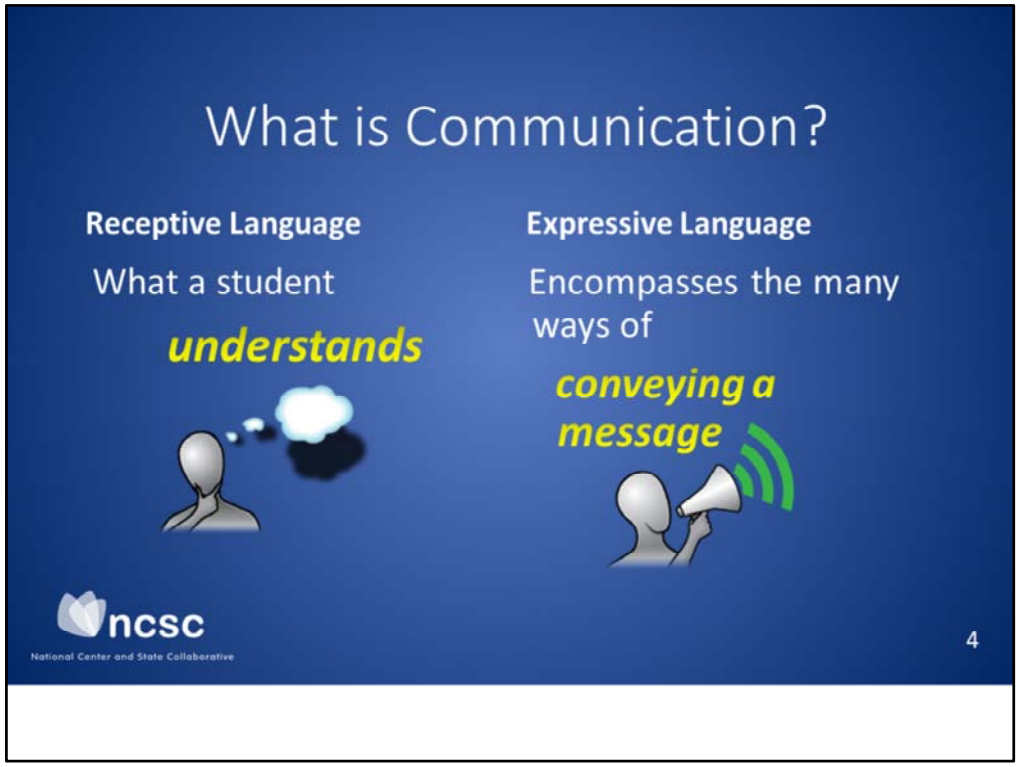
In this module, we discuss selecting appropriate communication targets to teach. This is module number 3 in the communication tool kit series.



In this module, we

- differentiate expressive and receptive language as important components of Communication.
- identify basic expressive and receptive language targets with examples.
- identify all the possible expressive modes within a total communication approach
- select tangible symbols to promote mutual understanding of targets
- consider the opportunities and strategies to practice the targets

Let's get started!



Receptive and expressive language skills develop from infancy. Receptive communication is what a student understands. We observe the results of receptive language when comprehending a story, understanding figurative language in a joke, following directions within a motor repertoire, or identifying by speech, pointing, or eye gaze, to name a few.

Expressive communication encompasses the many ways of conveying a message. These include oral speech for most students, but for students who don't use oral speech, we consider regularized body movements, facial expressions, signs, or use of augmentative or alternative communication (AAC); including pictures, switch devices, and words. Expressive language skills include learning the forms of language, such as verb forms, plural endings, and how to use pronouns, as well as the content of language, which leads to an event being related clearly and appropriately.

When receptive and expressive language skills come together – successful communication results.

Quiz Question

Successful communication is

- A) expressive mode
- B) receptive understanding
- C) using voice output device
- D) both A and B

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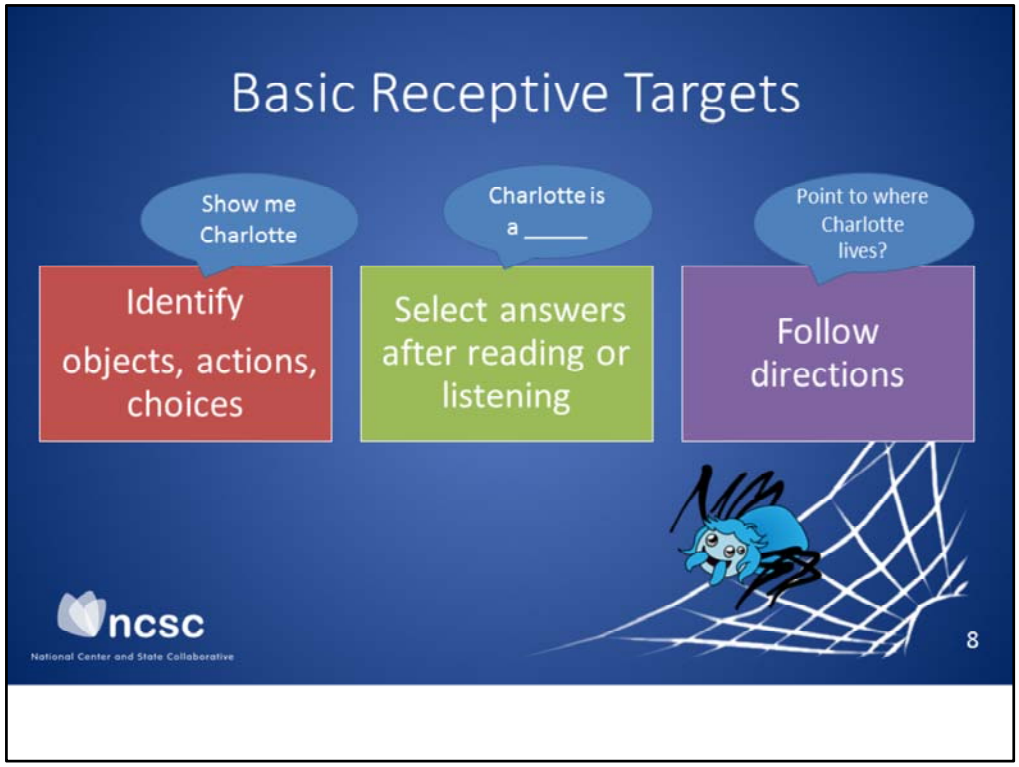
Basic expressive targets include:
Request attention from and interaction with another person, as well as request desired objects, actions, events, and persons.
Reject or refuse undesired objects, events, or actions, including the right to decline or reject all proffered choices.
Express personal preferences or feelings.
Select from offered choices and alternatives.
Request feedback or information about one's state, an object, a person, or an event of interest.



Should we add examples of receptive targets? Have spider run across the page.

Basic receptive targets include identifying objects, actions or choices.. We might say “Show me Charlotte”; Additional receptive targets include selecting answers from an array of choices after reading or listening such as “Charlotte is a _____ spider”… or following directions “point to the picture of where Charlotte lives”. (spider webs)

Quiz Question

A basic expressive target is

- A) identifying objects
- B) selecting answers from an array
- C) following directions
- D) requesting assistance

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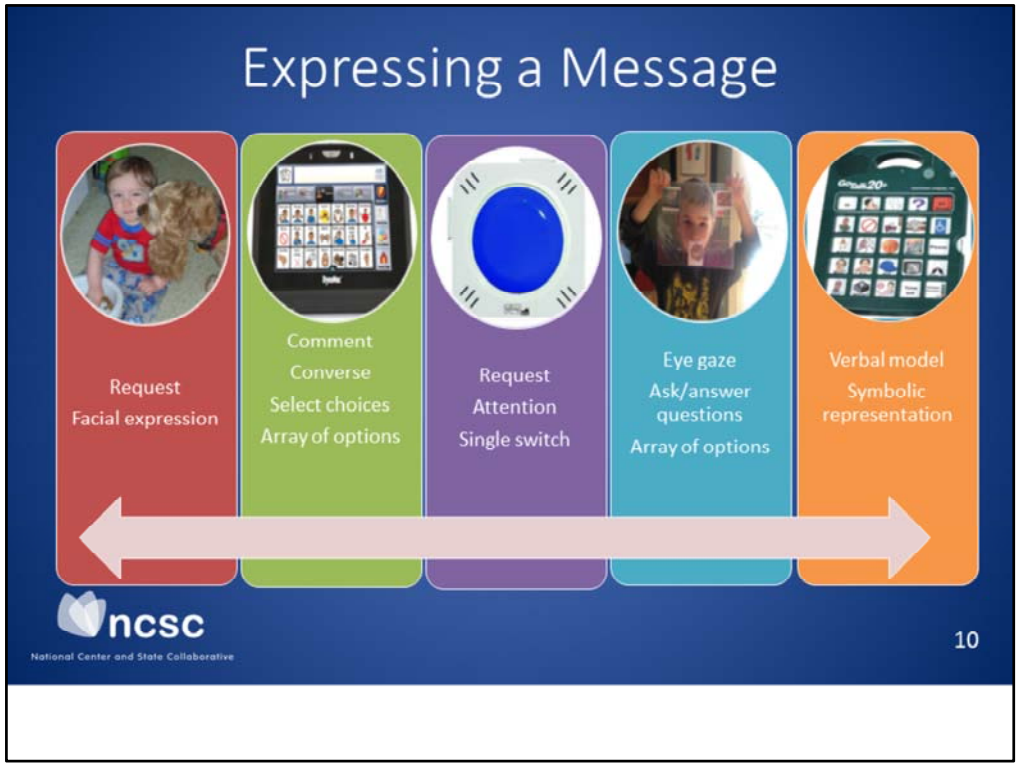

There is no prescribed way to express any given message…. The literature tells us that a total communication approach is best. Using a total communication approach teaches the student to use a variety of modes that are appropriate for the intended message. For example, a facial expression may be ok to affirm or reject an offered choice, whereas an AAC device would be more useful for commenting, answering questions or selecting from an array of options. A single switch is especially useful for seeking attention or asking for assistance among new AAC users. Single switches are simple and easy to use which may be especially important for beginners. Students who do not use oral speech should always have a way to ask for assistance as a safety mechanism. If vision is not a problem, a simple eye-gaze board may be constructed from a plastic sheet used to store trading cards and can be used to select from an array of choices, or answer questions from an array of options. Options using voice output are especially useful as they provide the student a verbal model in addition to the symbolic representations (pictures, objects, words) that may be provided.

Quiz Question

Communicating a message can take a variety of communication forms.

- A) True
- B) False

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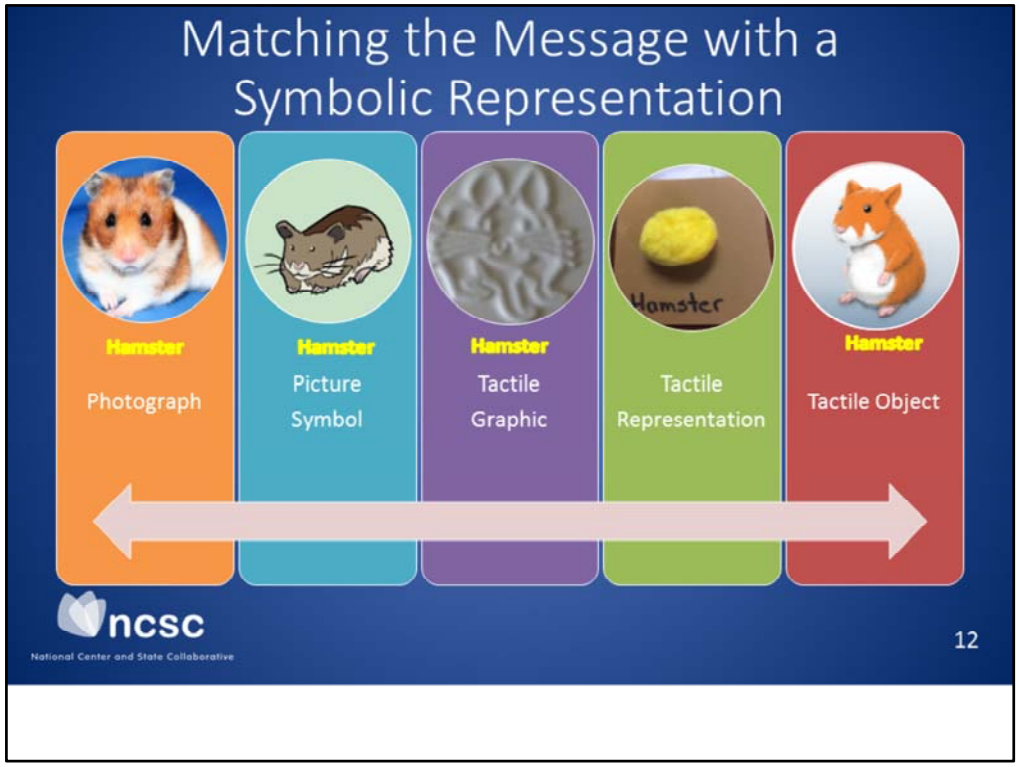
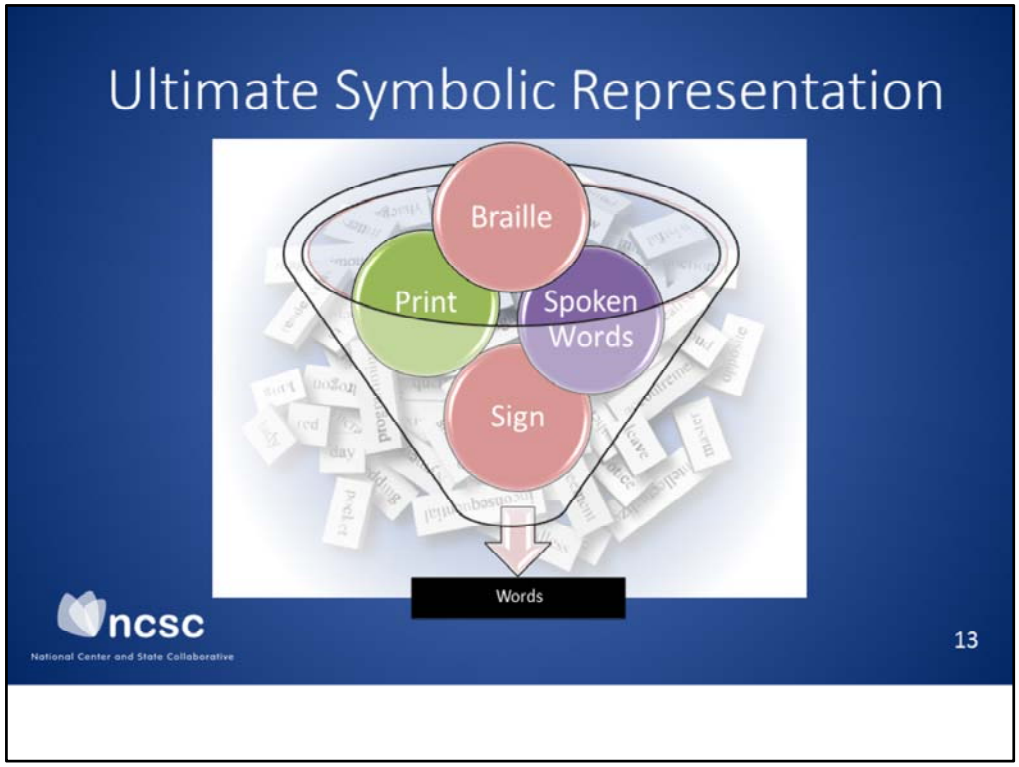


We also need to begin to develop the student's repertoire of symbols representing language. A variety of forms can be used and of course factors influencing communication as discussed in module 2, hearing, vision, and motor, will need to be in the symbol selection process. There is no hierarchy of symbols, meaning there is no need to start with objects if the student can see and use graphic representations such as photographs or picture symbols. Indeed, some researchers suggest that teaching the student to read the word as the symbol of choice may actually jump start reading (McNaughton et al). The tactile objects and graphics are for students who may have vision impairments.. These include tactile graphics, unique tactile representations, such as a the fuzzy ball to represent a hamster and tactile objects, such as a stuffed hamster. Miniature objects are discouraged as they often are not good representations for this purpose. Obviously, pairing the word with the representation is very important step toward literacy.



The ultimate symbol is a WORD whether spoken, printed, signed, or Braille. We need to make sure that the symbolic representations continue to help the student communicate and lead to reading and literacy.

Quiz Question

Students should follow a hierarchy in the use of symbols beginning with objects, pictures, and words.

- A) True
- B) False

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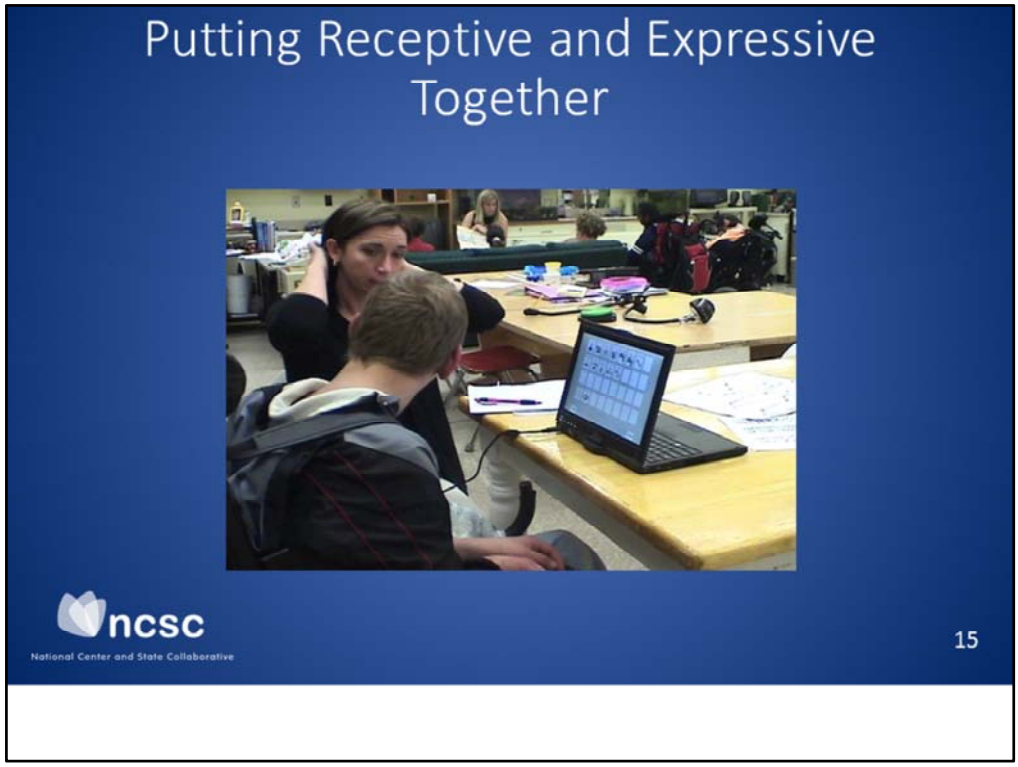
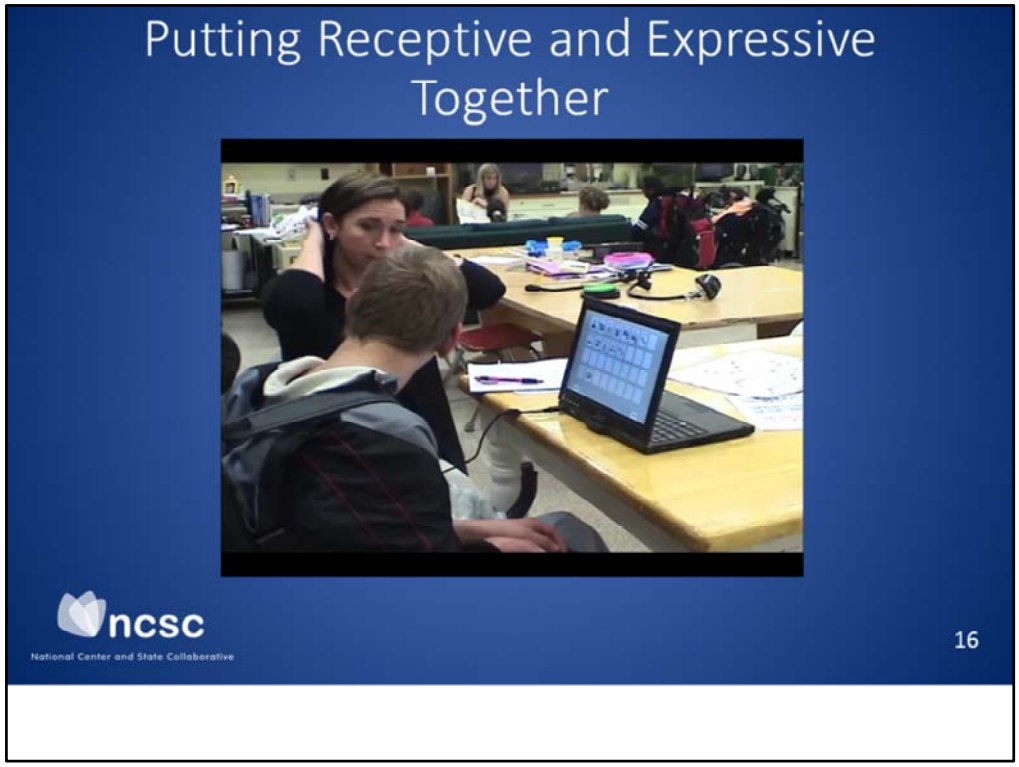


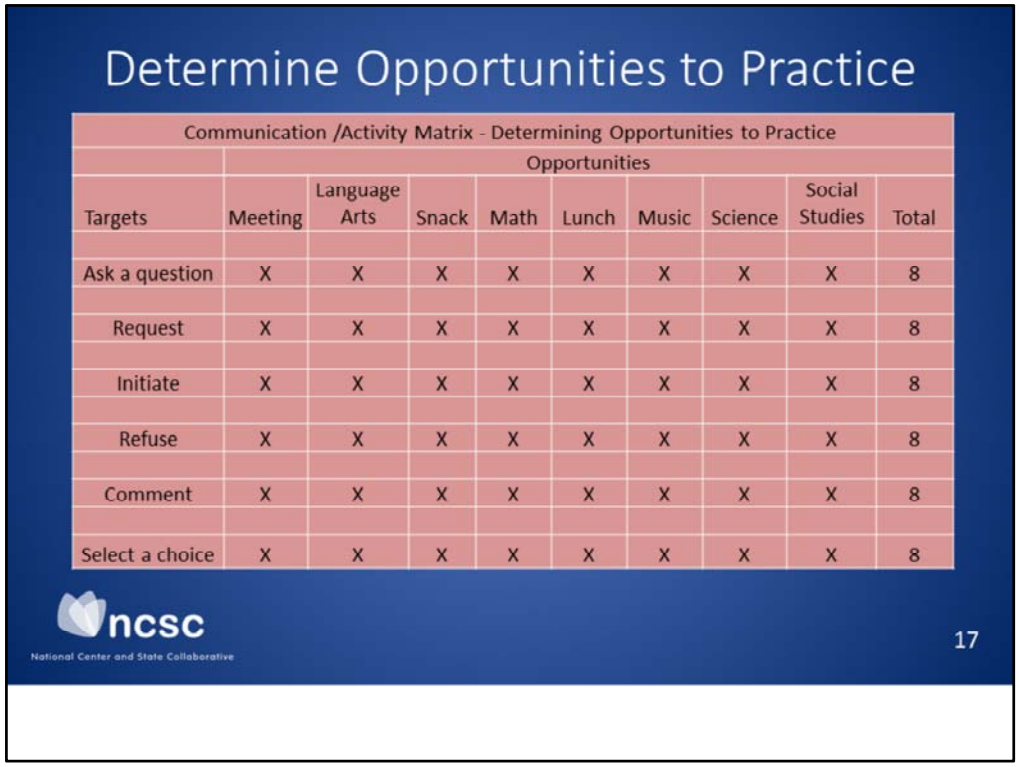
The video clip embedded here..

In this video clip we see a high school student “Bruce” using an AAC device – computer with dynamic screen to answer questions about the weather. His device has levels to include categories of symbols. Watch how Bruce listens to the questions and uses his device to select the correct response.



Teacher: Are you ready to go?
Teacher: We are going to do weather Bruce. Go to weather.
Bruce: Weather, weather
Teacher: Okay, thank you
Teacher: We've been graphing the forecasted and actual high temperatures.
Teacher: We've collected our data for the forecasted temperatures and the actual high temperatures.
Teacher: Now we are going to do some analysis.
Teacher: And we are going to use our graph to do that analysis.
Teacher: I'm going to ask you some questions. I want you to tell me the answers
Teacher: Look at this data point. Is this the forecasted temperature or the actual temperature?
Bruce: that is the forecasted temperature
Teacher: Yes it is. Very good job. We did our forecasted temperatures in black
Teacher: Now, look at this data point, is this the forecasted or actual temperature?
Bruce: That is the actual recorded temperature.
Teacher: Very good.
Teacher: Now, let's take one day. Let's look at October 22nd.
Teacher: Was the forecasted temperature higher or lower than the actual temperature?
Bruce: The forecasted temperature was higher than the actual temperature.

Teacher: Yes it was, very good.
Teacher: Now let's look at October 23rd.
Teacher: Was the forecasted temperature higher or lower than the actual temperature?
Bruce: The forecasted temperature was lower than the actual temperature.
Teacher: So let's look at October 20th.
Teacher: Were the forecasted and actual temperatures high, low, or about the same?
Bruce: The forecasted and actual temperature were the same.
Teacher: Now look at these forecasted temperatures
Teacher: Okay, are you looking at them?
Teacher: How many days was the forecasted temperature higher than the actual temperature?
Bruce: Eight
Teacher: Eight days, very good.
Teacher: Good work Bruce. Thank you for paying attention.



Finally, determining whether there are enough opportunities to practice basic communication targets through out the day is an important component of determining communication targets. We used a communication/classroom activity matrix to determine whether there were enough possible opportunities to practice some basic communication targets. The X indicates an opportunity to practice (X = opportunity) So, our student can ask a question in Morning meeting, language arts, math, music, science and social studies… similarly he can request/refuse or comment. Indeed we found at least 8 opportunities for each of the targets. The next step is to determine which modes should be matched to the communicative intent. So, for example is it ok to use facial expression to refuse? Should we set up the AAC device to ask questions so that the content can be included?

Sometimes thinking about communication opportunities for one student can be overwhelming – however, if we build communication programming into the routine of the classroom – This is how we ask a question, this is how we ask for help, this is how we refuse… etc… and those are taught as a part of classroom procedures and social skills it provides communication opportunities for everyone. Embedding communication into daily routines for the whole classroom also allows the teacher to model for everyone how to use a picture card, how to use a switch, or even a more sophisticated device. When the adults and peers model the use of devices, that makes the device more desirable to the student.

We will discuss teaching and monitoring progress in more detail later in the course.

Quiz Question

Multiple opportunities across the day to practice all communication targets are essential for students to master the use of communication.

- A) True
- B) False

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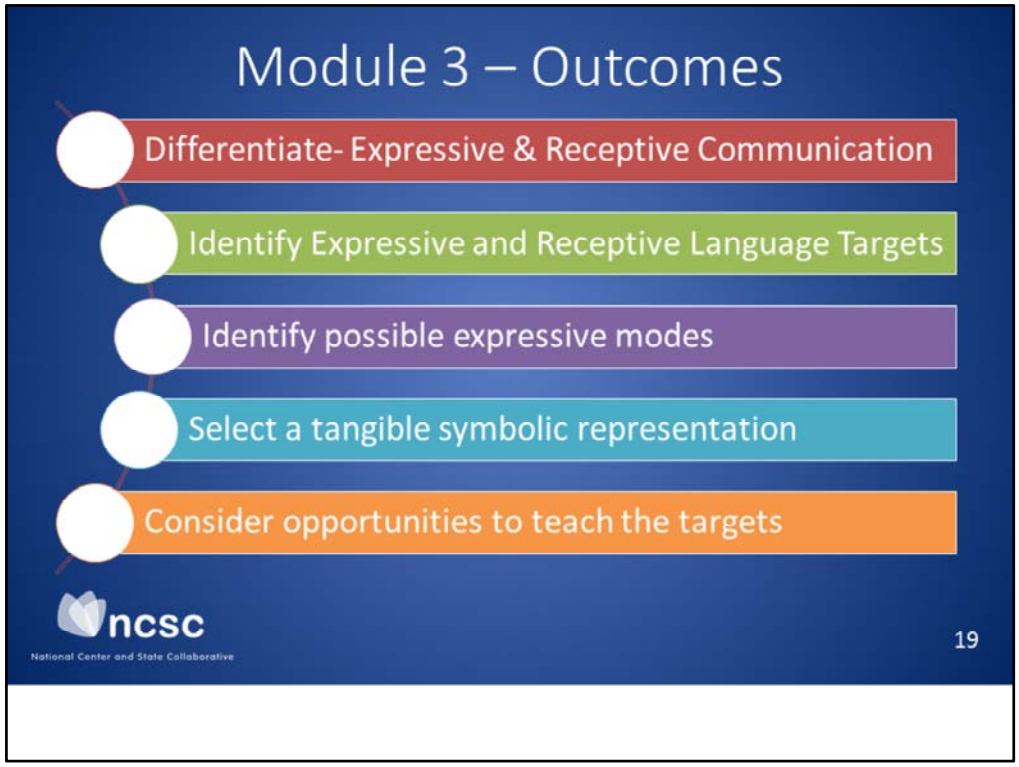

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References

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Thank You. The next module will be Selecting AAC.