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 intellectual disabilities. 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.
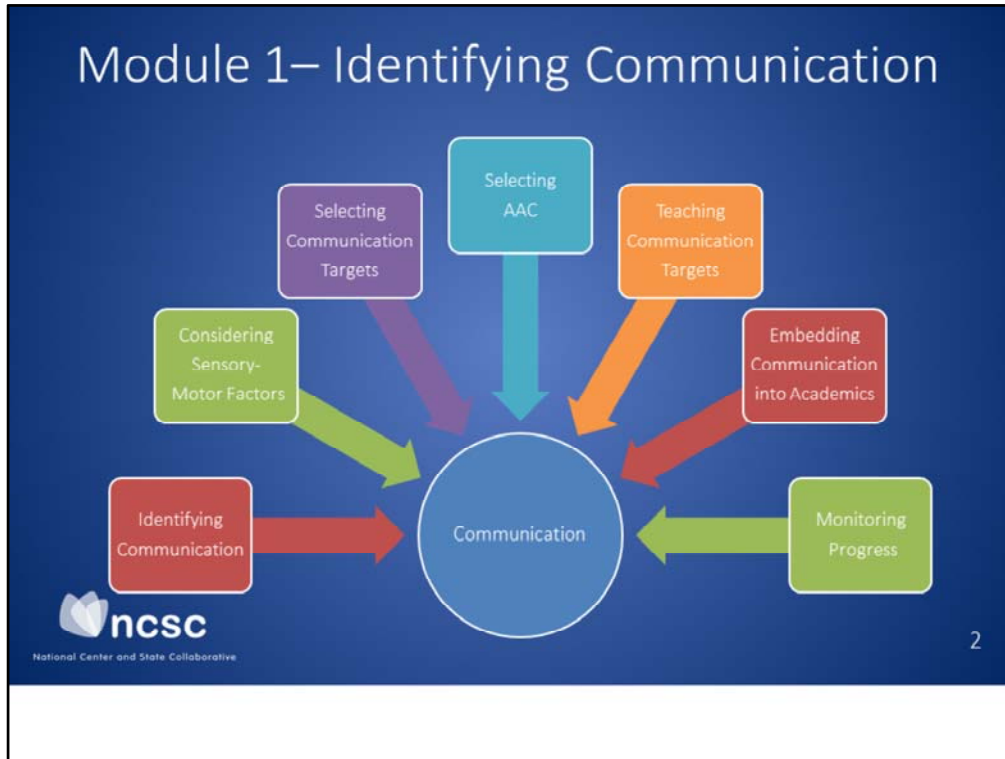
This is the first of our 7 modules, entitled: Identifying Student Communication . This series of modules is based on the premise that all students can and do communicate. Because our students often use unconventional forms of communication, our first challenge is to recognize and respond to those unconventional forms. This module addresses that challenge by providing demonstration and practice in identifying unconventional forms of communication. Our goal is that you will be able to transfer this skill to students in your classroom who are in need of a readable means of communication for successful participation in instruction and assessment.

In this module we will:

- Define communication and its components
- Discuss the communication partner's role in making a student's communication successful
- Practice identifying unconventional forms of student communication

In this module we will do the following:
- Define communication and its components
- Discuss the communication partner's role in making a student's communication successful
- Practice Identifying unconventional forms of student communication

In order to facilitate learning and practice we will use video examples of students using idiosyncratic communication patterns.

Please note: The video examples in this module were selected purely to demonstrate a student's *unconventional communication behavior* but may not depict best practice in other areas such as, instruction, positioning etc. Video should be viewed only in this targeted context. Remember, we must be able to meet students and classrooms where they are and go from there!

Let's Get Started

Participation in assessment and instruction requires successful communication between the student and the adult who is completing the assessment or instruction

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As we get started we need to remember that participation in assessment or instruction requires successful communication between the student and the adult who is completing the assessment or instruction. To make sense of this statement we first need to come to a consensus on the definition of communication.

Defining communication

Intent

➕ Mode/Form

Listener Comprehension

_____

Communicator's Desired Outcome

OR Successful Communication

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Let's take a minute to define the elements of successful communication. This equation represents the three components of successful communication: **intent**, which is the individual's reason for communicating; **form** or **mode,** the specific behaviors used by the individual to communicate; and **listener comprehension**, which should result in the desired response. When all of these elements are in place, communication will be successful – and when communication is unsuccessful, we can often trace it back to a problem with one of these elements.

All of the elements below are components of the communication equation except for:

A) Intent
B) Oral Speech
C) Mode/Form
D) Listener Comprehension

In the last slide we defined intent as the reason for communicating. Here are examples of the most important intents that our students need to be able to express. These intents include: requesting, refusing or protesting, greeting others, commenting and answering. Think about your students for a moment. Are they able to successfully express these intents during the school day?

Requesting, refusing/protesting, greeting, commenting and answering are all examples of:
A) Modes/Forms of Communication
B) Intents/Functions of Communication
C) Challenges of Communication

In our communication equation we defined form or mode as the specific behaviors used by the individual to communicate. Remember a student's mode of communication may take any observable form. Some are conventional and easily understood; others are unconventional and more challenging to identify.

Which of the following is not an example of a conventional mode/form of communication?
A) Print
B) Body Movement
C) Sign
D) Speech

Challenges to Listener Comprehension

Even though all students communicate in some way, their communication is not always successful, and comprehension may be challenging for the listener. This may happen because:

- ❖ Some students use communication behaviors which are hard to understand (i.e. idiosyncratic or unconventional communication behaviors)
- ❖ Adults may not identify or recognize student output as communicative

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The last component of the communication equation is listener comprehension. Even though all students communicate, the forms they use may be challenging to recognize or understand. This may happen when a student uses idiosyncratic or unconventional forms to convey their intents, or when the adult listener does not identify or recognize the student's output as communicative. When working with these students our task is twofold: One, to improve our ability to identify the student's communication and two, to assist them in increasing the readability of their communicative output.

Every student's mode of communication will be conventional and easily understood.
A) True
B) False

Our goal in this module is to increase our ability to identify communication by:

- Learning to recognize behavior as communicative
- Learning to identify the student's communicative intent, and
- Learning to identify the various modes the student may use for communication

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Given the challenges we just discussed, our goal in this module is to increase our ability to identify communication by:

- Learning to recognize behavior as communicative
- Learning to identify the student's communicative intent, and
- Learning to identify the various modes or forms the student may use for communication

Student communication is not always successful, and our ability to understand may be challenged because:
A) Some students use communication behaviors which are hard to understand.
B) We may not identify or recognize student output as communicative.
C) Some students do not communicate.
D) A&B only.

Guided Practice: Identification of Communication

- Student: Simon (4:0)
- Your task:
  - Review the completed *Communication Observation Form* on Simon in the next slide
  - Review the entries before you watch the video
  - Watch for the intents and forms we've listed on Simon's observation form
  - Note how the teacher responds to Simon's communicative attempts

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We will now begin some guided practice on identifying communication. We will start with a video of Simon, age 4, engaging in messy play, one of his favorite activities. At present Simon is nonverbal and uses a variety of unconventional modes to communicate. As you watch this video, look for both the intents and the communication modes used.

Before you watch the video, take a moment to review the Communication Observation Form on the next slide. Be sure to:

- Review the entries before you watch the video
- Watch for the intents and forms we've listed on Simon's observation form
- Note how the teacher responds to Simon's communicative attempts

Communication Observation Form: Simon

Content-Intent-Function	Mode or Form	Desired Response???
Comment	Smiles	Yes
Comment	Vocalizes	Yes
Request	Puts hands out	Yes
Respond	Eye Pointing	Yes
Request	Eye Pointing	Yes
Request	Gesture similar to sign for "more"	Yes

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This simple form displays a short summary of some of the interactions you will see in Simon's video. It will help you be ready to identify his non-conventional communications.

Guided Practice: Simon

Teacher 1: Want some more? Say wet. Want wet?
Teacher 2: Wet
Teacher 1: You do it.
Teacher 2: You can have it.
Teacher 1: Get it.
Teacher 2: Get some.
Teacher 1: oooohhhhh
Teacher 1: ewww messy
Teacher 1: Simon's hands are so messy
Teacher 2: shake them off, shake them off
Teacher 1: Oh you're looking at them, say my hands are messy.
Teacher 2: It kind of looks like he is trying to wash them off.
Teacher 1: Say my hands are messy
Teacher 2: Which one do you want? More or dry off?
Teacher 2: You want to wash off or you want more?
Teacher 2: You like it don't ya?
Teacher 1: oooh say I think I want some more.
Teacher 2: Want some more?
Teacher 1: Hold your hand out.
Teacher 2: I'm smiling
Teacher 1: ewwwwwwww

Teacher 1: You got me.
Teacher 2: I like my hands to be messy.
Teacher 1: Hi
Teacher 2: Look at that smile
Simon: Heyyyyyyyy
Teacher 1: Heyyyyyy
Teacher 2: He likes his hands to be wet
Teacher 2: Yeah he hasn't spit
Teacher 1: At all
Teacher 1: You spit because you like your hands wet.
Simon: Hand
Teacher 1: We think. Is that why?
Teacher 1: Not because you are bored.
Teacher 1: Yeah
Teacher 2: You want to dry off?
Teacher 1: That's it.
Teacher 1: Do you want to take it off or do you want more?

Communication Observation Form: Simon

Content-Intent-Function	Mode or Form	Desired Response???
Comment	Smiles	Yes
Comment	Vocalizes	Yes
Request	Puts hands out	Yes
Respond	Eye Pointing	Yes
Request	Eye Pointing	Yes
Request	Gesture similar to sign for "more"	Yes

What great communication interactions! Did you see all of the communicative behaviors that we saw? Was there anything that we missed? Did you notice how easy it would be to miss some of Simon's behaviors such as his eye pointing to request or respond to his teacher? Did you notice how the teacher consistently responded to Simon's communication? We were especially excited to see what appeared to be an approximation of the sign "more" toward the end of the video.

More Practice: Identification of Communication

❖Student: Steven (12:2)

❖Your task:

  ❖Review the partially completed *Communication Observation Form* on Steven in the next slide
  ❖Review the entries before you watch the video
  ❖See how many different ways Steven finds to request the food and how he expresses frustration
  ❖Does the teacher respond to Steven's communication?

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Our second practice example is Steven, a middle school student, age 12. Steven's teacher and speech pathologist would like for him to learn to make requests. For this video, we have completed the intent column on Steven's Communication Observation Form displayed on the next slide, but we did not complete the "Mode/Form" column

For this practice session, your tasks will be to:

  ❖Review the partially completed *Communication Observation Form* on Steven in the next slide before you watch the video
  ❖When you watch the video, see how many *different forms or modes* Steven will use to request the food and how he expresses frustration
  ❖Note whether the adults respond to Steven's communication?

Communication Observation Form: Steven

Content-Intent-Function	Mode or Form	Desired Response???
Request		Yes
Request		No
Request		No
Comment: Frustration		No
Request		No
Request		Yes

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Here is Steven's partially completed Communication Observation Form. Take a moment before you begin the video to review the communication intents Steven will display.

Now, as you watch the video, see how many different forms or modes Steven uses for the identified intents.

Steven

Teacher 1: eat

Teacher 1: Eat
Teacher 1: Is that good?
Steven: Signs "more"
Teacher 1: more
Teacher 1: Here's more
Teacher 2: What do you want Steven?
Steven: (Grunt)
Teacher 2: Do you want a cheeto?
Teacher 2: Show me more (signs "more")
Steven: (signs "more")
Teacher 2: Thank you Steven
Teacher 2: Good job

Communication Observation Form: Steven

Content-Intent-Function	Mode or Form	Desired Response???
Request	Sign for "more"	Yes
Request	Reach	No
Request	Approximation of sign for "eat"	No
Comment: Frustration	Hitting his face	No
Request	Touches teacher's arm	No
Request	Sign for "more"	Yes

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How did you do?

While the form of communication intervention in the video may not reflect a naturalistic or best practice approach, it certainly does give us a good picture of how Steven is able to communicate! Though we haven't listed them all, we found up to six different forms of requesting, but the adults only responded to one form. Did this lead to the two expressions of frustration that we saw as well? What did you find?

Are you becoming more comfortable with identifying communicative intents expressed in unconventional forms? Let's try one more example on your own.

Practice on Your Own: Identification of Communication

❖Student: Shelly (20:6)

❖Your task as you watch the video:

  ❖Record the intents and modes that Shelly uses in the following video
  ❖Does the teacher respond to Shelly's communication?

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Ok – now you're on your own! Our final practice example is Shelly, who is 20 years of age and will soon leave school possibly without a clear communication system in place. In this video, Shelly has been given one of her first opportunities to learn to use a voice output switch device to request more of a favorite activity, in this case, going for a walk with her friends. As you watch the video, record the intents you observe and the forms/modes used to express these intents. Be sure to note whether or not the adult responds to Shelly's communications as well.

Practice on Your Own: Identification of Communication

Content-Intent-Function	Mode or Form	Desired Response???

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Here is a table you can use as a model for recording your observations for our next practice video

Teacher 1: Oh no, we stopped! What do you want to do?
Teacher 1: You want more?
Teacher 1: You want more?
Shelly's AAC device: More
Teacher 1: Good job!
Teacher 1: Good good good
Teacher 1: Good job Miss. Shelly
Teacher 1: More more
Teacher 1 More walking.
Teacher 1: More walking for Ms. Karen.
Teacher 2: I know
Teacher 1: Here do you want to push her?
Teacher 1: A little bit.
Teacher 1: Oh we stopped.
Teacher 1: What do we do, what happens?
Teacher 1: Shelly
Teacher 2: She knows
Shelly's AAC device: More
Teacher 2: Excellent
Shelly's AAC device: More
Teacher 1: Good job Shelly, good job.

Communication Observation Form: Shelly

| Content-Intent-Function	Mode or Form	Desired Response???
Comment: Recognition & Engagement	Lifts head and looks toward teacher	Yes
Comment: Pleasure	Smiles	Yes
Request	Activating switch which says "more"	Yes
Comment or Request for continued interaction	Turns her head toward SLP's voice and maintains her gaze there	Yes

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How did you do? Do you agree with our observations? Take a moment to compare them with yours.

We are especially excited about this video because it reminds us that it is never too late to provide communication systems to our students. In this video, we see Shelly combine some of her idiosyncratic communications with her newly developed switch use. What is especially impressive is that Shelly was able to do all this even in light of the poor positioning in her chair! Just think what she would be capable of, even at the age of 20, if correct positioning, assistive technology, and AAC were provided.
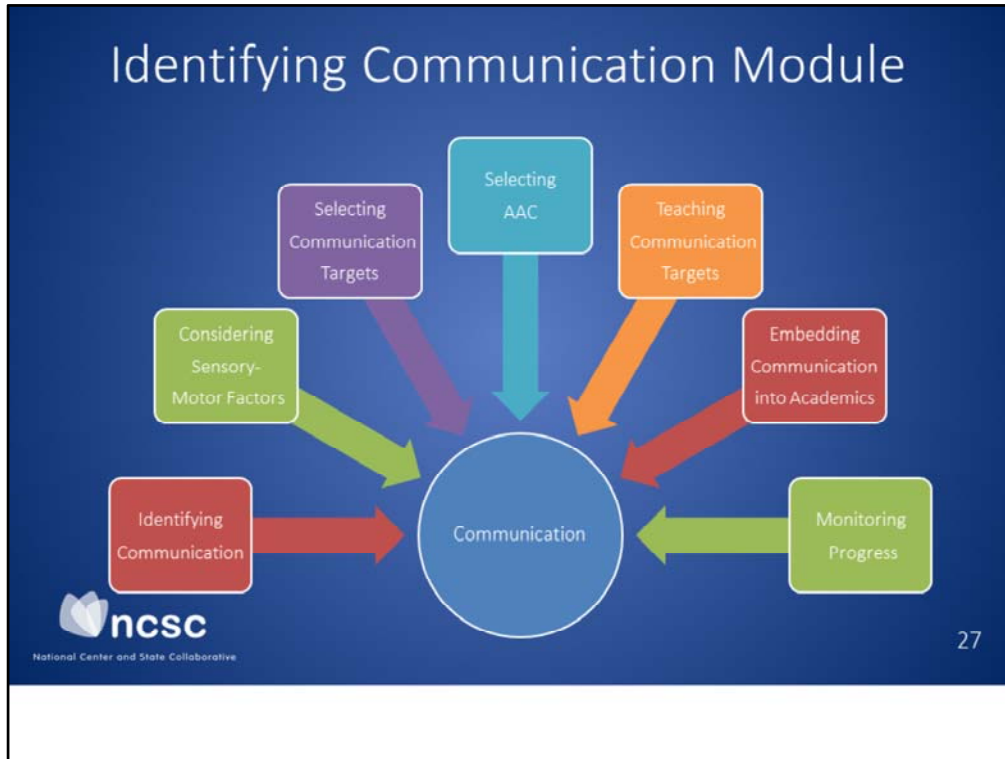
In this module we discussed the importance of identifying students' communication. You experienced three examples which are typical of those students who may have difficulty in alternate assessment or classroom curriculum due to the lack of easily readable communication.   For these students, identifying their current communication intents and modes or forms is the first step in facilitating development of a communication system that can be used for participation in the assessment process and in the classroom curriculum.

Let's Review

- ❖ Every student communicates
- ❖ Communication requires an intent, a form, and listener comprehension
- ❖ Unconventional forms of communication can pose a challenge for successful communication
- ❖ We must learn to identify students' communicative attempts regardless of the form or mode they currently use

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This brings us to the end of module one. Let's review what we have learned:

- First, we have agreed that every student communicates
- Second, we have learned that communication requires an intent, a form or mode, and listener comprehension in order to be successful.
- Third, we have learned that unconventional forms of communication, which many of our students use, can pose a challenge for successful communication, by making it difficult to recognize when communication is occurring.
- And finally we have practiced identifying students' communicative output regardless of the form or mode they currently use.

We have now completed module 1. The next module in the NCSC TOOL KIT will be:
Considering Sensory and Motor factors. Thank you for joining us today.

Here are some helpful references and resources that may be of interest to you.