Scaffolding AAC Success

> **"The success of the interaction depends not only on the skills of this individual, but also on those of the communication partner"**
>
> (Kent-Walsh & McNaughton, 2005, p. 195)

Scaffolding refers to the use of a range of strategies which help students to be successful in their communication attempts and further develop their communication skills. These include:

- Co-constructing meaning
- Suggesting
- Additional prompts and cues (see 'Scaffolding AAC success: Prompts and Cues')

Co-constructing meaning

As our students' language is developing and they are using key words, we often need to negotiate meaning. We actively problem solve what the student is trying to communicate and assist them to work out how they could say their message. This may involve:

- Using what the student has said, along with contextual cues and our knowledge of the student to offer suggestions.
- Using some clarifying questions and statements to confirm our understanding e.g. "You're talking about something that happened at school" or "is it about the book?" *However, avoid overusing checking questions to the point that they might interfere with the interaction*.
- Supporting navigation to pages in the device to assist a student to provide more information e.g. Navigate to the places page to support giving information about where it happened.
- We may need to offer multiple interpretations until we receive an affirmative response.

(Porter & Cohen, 2011)

As an example, within a library session a student says 'book', how might you interpret possible messages in context? There are some ideas below:

While they are looking at the book you are holding:
'Oh, you want me to <u>read</u> the <u>book</u>'

Reaching towards the pile of books:
'you want a <u>different book</u>'

Smiling and holding the book:
'you <u>like</u> that <u>book</u>'

Making suggestions

We can support our students to communicate more effectively and take up more communication opportunities by making some suggestions of how or what they may wish to communicate. This could include:

☐ Suggesting a method of communication to use

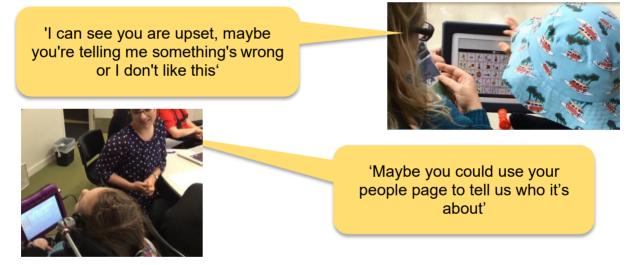> 'I don't understand, maybe you could use your talker to tell me'

☐ Suggesting an opportunity to communicate

> 'Maybe you'd like to share some news with a friend this recess'

☐ Suggesting the types of words or categories that may help communicate a message

> 'I can see you are upset, maybe you're telling me something's wrong or I don't like this'

> 'Maybe you could use your people page to tell us who it's about'

References

Kent-Walsh, J., & McNaughton, D. (2005) Communication Partner Instruction in AAC: Present Practices and Future Directions. *Augmentative and Alternative Communication*, 21(3), 195-204.

Porter, G., & Cohen, S. (2011). *Pragmatic Organisation Dynamic Display Communication Books: Introductory Workshop*. Glen Waverley, Australia: Cerebral Palsy Education Centre.