

Tips to Improve Instruction: Supporting Effective Communication

Types of Communication

The following table identifies support strategies to use based on the learner's communication style. Under each type of communication, you will find a brief description of what the type of communication looks like in action.

Types of Communication	Strategies
Verbal Student communicates through oral language independently.	Provide simple, clear directions.
Verbal with Prompting Student communicates in simple words or short phrases. The student needs prompts to generate language.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use visuals, gestures, or sign language. • Provide simple and concise language.
Sign Language Student may use sign language expressing and understanding.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consult with the special educator, speech therapist, or deaf educator on effectively assisting students. • Visit www.aslpro.com for video tutorials. • Sign language can be used as a strategy to increase understanding.
PECS (Picture Exchange Communication System) Student may have minimal or no verbal language. He/she communicates through pictures using Board maker, writing with symbols, or PECS.	Once student provides symbol, read the symbol to indicate your understanding, and then respond to the request. Encourage, but do not require verbal participation in the exchange.
Augmentative Communication (Voice Output Devices) Student has limited, difficult to understand, or no verbal communication. The student uses voice output devices for expressive communication.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Model use of the device in the beginning. • Provide opportunities for the students to use the device for responding. • Make sure the device is available to the student at all appropriate times.

Tips for Communicating Effectively with Students

- Maintain proximity and use a low volume when communicating with students.
- Provide clear and simply stated directions of what you expect the student to do instead of telling them what you don't want them to do.
- Repeat back to the student what you think they are saying to clarify what the student means.
- Some students may require a model, picture, or sign of the action paired with verbal direction.
- Use age appropriate language when speaking with students. (Refrain from using "baby talk.")
- Encourage students to use age appropriate language.
- Allow students time to communicate independently using their mode(s) of communication.
- Allow for extra processing and response time.

Examples

The following table puts communication tips in action by reframing common phrases. Using clear communication helps both the student and the instructor.

Instead of Saying:	Say/Model	Reinforce
"No yelling!"	"Use a calm voice." "Use an inside voice."	Model an inside voice while saying... "Now I can listen, you are using a quiet voice." "Nice job using your inside voice."
"Don't run!"	"We walk in the hallway." "Use walking feet." "Walk please."	"Thank you for walking."
"Stop calling out!"	"Raise your hand." "When you raise your hand, the teacher will answer your question."	"Thank you for raising your hand." "I like the way you raised your hand to share your ideas."