

CREATING COMMUNICATION OPPORTUNITIES

in a heuristic play-based environment
Supporting learners with SLD & Autism

 **OBSERVE**

 **BE AVAILABLE**

 **CONNECT**

 **MODEL**

 **REPAIR**

 **EXTEND**

 **REINFORCE**

 **GENERALISE**

 **CELEBRATE**

Take your time

Count to 10

What's their Big Idea?

Respond to curiosity

Learn Together

Have Fun!

Add a verb or an adjective

Support with AAC

Create a narrative

CREATING COMMUNICATION OPPORTUNITIES



OBSERVE

Careful observation can tell you so much.
Take your time. Can you record evidence for assessment?

What is the child really interested in?
Build on their existing skills, knowledge and interests.

Look for clues to their “Big Idea” - is it dripping, spinning, building/falling, rolling, transporting or something else?

Who or what do they respond to? Is it effective?

Check - Do you need to get involved at this point?

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BE AVAILABLE

Take the child's lead.

Check again - Do you need to get involved at this point?

Show interest but carefully judge your distance so that the child can choose if your involvement would be ok.

You are supporting the child's Emotional Literacy by being interested in what they are doing.

If they look your way it may be an invitation to join in.

Position yourself at the child's level. Play alongside first.

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CONNECT

Take the child's lead. Build trust. Take your time.

Tune in - Core principle from Intensive Interaction

Get Connected - Core principle from the Curiosity Programme

Respond. To things that are relevant to the child.

Imitate actions and sounds. If the action or sound is important to the child then it is worth copying accurately. Being alongside allows you to do this using the appropriate hand/arm/leg.

Provide encouragement and show interest - "Wow!" "Ooooh!"

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MODEL

Respond to gestures, body language and expressions.

Add words or point to a symbol on a communication board.

“Look spider” to label an action or object.

Add spoken language - think about the child’s language levels.

This could be

- a sound effect - “zzzz” with a toy bee
- spoken words “whoosh” or “zoom” as the rocket goes up
- an initial sound - “t... t... t... tractor”

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REPAIR

Be sensitive.

Is the child ready to accept a repair to their language?

Is the repair strategy helpful in supporting clarity?

This may support independence and self-regulation in the future.

Errors in language may include speech sound production, wrong tense or pronoun, word-finding difficulties... or something else.

Model back an alternative. Do not expect or request that the child repeat it back.

Consider using AAC to support - Communication board or signing

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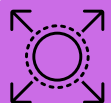
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EXTEND

Can you support the child to stretch beyond the single word?

Add a verb or an adjective with a supporting sign

- “monkey” could become “monkey jumping” or “brown monkey”
- “Look” could become “Look up!” “Look tractor!”

Try starting a sentence and leaving a long pause.

Modelling new language for the child to add their own response.

- “I wonder which animal is hiding. It’s a”

Try imitating any gestalt style phrases and changing slightly.

- “Let’s go to the park” could become “Let’s go to... fly a kite”

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REINFORCE

Give immediate feedback.

Encourage. Agree. Celebrate.

Practice then repeat (and repeat and repeat!)

Try tapping out the words as syllables.

Change your tone of voice or turn it into a song.

“Dig a hole - do do do do do dooo!” To the tune of Baby Shark!

Consider sabotage - can the child use the learnt language when the objects are out of sight? Or to recall or retell the event?

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GENERALISE

Can the child use the same communication strategies...

- with different people including peers?
- with different resources?
- in a different room? at home?
- in the outside play area?
- at a different times of day
- with a more complex set of symbols?

How can you facilitate this? Try changing a single element at a time e.g. moving the exact contents of the tuff tray outside but keeping communication partners the same.

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CELEBRATE

Have fun!

Encourage. Smile. Celebrate.

Reflect with the child what you have achieved.

- For some this will be a quick high-five or a smile.
- For others this may be supporting them to create a personal narrative. Try using Tales Toolkit to support this.

“I played with the diggers in the sand. One got stuck. I rescued it with a spade!”

Reflect and share “golden moments” with other supporting adults.

Watch back any recordings to spot little details you may have missed.

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Useful Website Links

[Foreland Fields School - Online Communication Hub](#)

[Kent NHS Speech Therapy - The Pod](#)

[Mencap - Supporting Communication](#)

[Tales Toolkit](#)

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