

## Using Tactile Interactive Conversational Signing

### Topic #1: Moving from Co-active to Interactive Signing (20 min)

Tactile Signing (hand under hand) used for receptive communication. It is different than co-active sign which is basically hand over hand sign. Co-active sign should not be used too long or it will encourage dependence. Tactile sign is generally produced face to face and partners should be at the same level in positioning. Close proximity to each other is essential. When receiving information through tactile sign, the child's non-dominant hand is used for one handed signs.

### When is the child ready for a more formal communication system (tactile sign)?

#### When the child:

1. Is able to imitate.
2. Understands and responds to some signals and cues interactively.
3. Uses signals and cues intentionally and in meaningful ways.
4. Shows an interest in objects and uses them in meaningful ways.

### Begin by using one or two signs at a time and encouraging independence.

1. Select signs for activities/objects that are motivating and meaningful to the child.
2. Select signs for objects/activities that the child recognizes so the sign can be paired with them.
3. Select signs that the child understands receptively-recognizes them when they feel them.
4. Select signs that are functional and meaningful.

#### Procedures:

1. Show child object/activity
2. Make the sign while the child tracks/follows your sign.
3. Give the child time to respond
4. Reinforce any attempt from child by giving them what they want.
5. If child does not respond, let child feel the tactile sign again
6. Produce the sign co-actively.
7. Encourage child to sign independently through gentle prompting.

### In order for conversational/interactive language skills to develop, the child must:

1. Communicate about a wide variety of experiences
2. Realize the power of communication
3. Have a variety of opportunities to communicate every day.
4. Others use the communication system the child knows and is comfortable with.

Initially, do not correct a sign the child has attempted to make. After a period of time, when you notice the child is consistently making the sign wrong, then begin to start helping them produce it correctly.

## **Topic #2: Encouraging your child to sign interactively**

**(13 min)**

Before using interactive signing, the child will need to have an understanding of the rules of conversations. This includes being able to:

1. Initiate conversations
2. Take turns
3. Stay on topic
4. End conversations
5. Engage in face to face when possible
6. Understand receptively and respond expressively

Helping the conversation along by:

1. Position of hands-hand under hand-if child will not follow, gently grab their thumb with your thumb and index finger. Use both hands so child understands how sign is produced.
2. Help them locate where the sign is placed. When the sign comes to your body, help child feel the location of the body part you are touching. (I.e. sign for mom).
3. Help child know when it is their turn. Possible ways:
  - a. Slide your hands under theirs and wait for a response. If no response after a wait time, then help them sign co-actively and wait.
  - b. Gently tap the back of their hand
  - c. Rest your hands on their legs/lap
  - d. Provide an auditory prompt.

Eventually fade out the turn taking as the child progresses.

## **Topic #3: Suggestions: Vocabulary:**

**(15 min)**

Select signs for:

1. People
2. Objects
3. Activities/events

Select signs that are:

1. Meaningful
2. Interesting
3. Useful
4. Motivating
5. Easy for the child to make
6. Easily paired with the child's current communication system

Ways to encourage use is through:

1. Choice making
2. Turn taking
3. Use of More-begin adding a second word

#### 4. Use of Finish

Be aware of the fact that Deaf blind children may:

1. Reach a plateau for a period of time
2. Initially, use the same sign for different things

#### **Topic 4: Suggestions: Using comments, directions, and questions. (20 min)**

When your child is using several signs then increase the amount of information given to them by using:

1. Comments to describe:
  - a. What you are feeling, doing, thinking, etc.
  - b. What the child is doing, touching, tasting, hearing, smelling, etc.
2. Give Directions including:
  - a. One part-start here
  - b. Two part-include as child progresses
  - c. More
3. Asking questions which can be used to encourage independent signing. Questions can be used to:
  - a. Start conversations
  - b. Continue conversations
  - c. Get information.
4. Do not rely on just open ended questions such as yes/no. Make use of WH questions, starting with those that can be attached to an object/person such as:
  - a. What
  - b. Where
  - c. WhoAnd then include more difficult questions such as:
  - d. Which
  - e. When
  - f. How
  - g. why
5. Then start to use more open ended questions such as:
  - a. Where are your shoes?
  - b. How many cookies do you want?
6. Use closed ended questions sparingly as the child may become frustrated if they do not know the answer (save for test).
7. As the child progresses, generalize the child's skills by:
  - a. Reinforce the child's attempts by being attentive and responsive.

- b. Expand language techniques, such as repeating words child uses in a more mature way-always use a bit higher level than the child to challenge them but not be too overwhelming.
- c. Incorporate all types of expressions into conversations such as body language, vocalizations, facial expressions
- d. Expose the child to many different situations and people as possible.

### **Topic # 5: Creating a Communication Environment through Calendar System (15)**

#### **Establish an environment that is:**

1. Predictable and consistent
2. Encourages independence
3. Provides for rich language opportunities

#### **Best way to establish predictable routines is through Routines:**

1. Lets child know what will happen next
2. Allows for child to develop confidence and feel safe
3. Allows the child to learn about consistency and order to his daily routine.

#### **Routines assist the child in:**

1. Learning to anticipate events
2. Learning about order and sequence
3. Learning how to communicate

#### **Incorporate into the calendar system a variety of communication methods such as:**

1. Signals and cues
2. Co-active signs
3. Objects
4. Traced objects
5. Photographs of real objects
6. Pictures
7. Abstract symbols

#### **Procedure:**

Set up calendar system for routine

Begin using one box at a time and use the finish box when done with activity

Observe for anticipation

When child has anticipation box and uses the finish box, then each morning go through all of the calendar boxes in the morning to discuss routine.

The calendar system needs to be accessible. New items may be added. A future box may be used when the child selects an item that they cannot have right away.

Begin to expand to weekly planning.

#### **Calendar Systems helps the child:**

1. Develop time concepts

2. Make the connection between the sign and the object
3. Strengthens memory skills
4. Allows for expansion on interactive signing such as commenting/questions, making choices.

### **Topic #6: Encouraging Independence and Rich Language Opportunities (15)**

3 ways to create a communicative environment:

1. Provide a predictable and consistent environment
  - a. Calendar systems
2. Encourage independence/exploration in a safe environment (i.e. rope)
  - a. Organize living/school area so child has consistency in where things are at.
  - b. Help the child learn the environment, knowing where things are at.
  - c. Encourage conversations about environment, such as where you are at, what items are called, what they are used for, how they work, etc. Do this daily till the child learns the environment.
  - d. Add new items and repeat (include exposure to dangerous items)
3. Provide an environment rich in language opportunities.
  - a. Give your child a way to initiate interactions (vocalizations, switches, etc).
  - b. Be aware of what items are motivating and enjoyable to the child. Put them out of reach to give a reason to communicate.
    - i. Provide a wide variety of activities and materials.

### **Topic #7: Selecting Materials and Activities that Promote Interaction: (10)**

Encourage the child to investigate objects and activities

Suggestions for materials

motivating

Functional

Developmentally appropriate

Age appropriate.

**Remember:**

1. Materials should encourage interaction between the adult and child
2. Select items that require completion of several steps.
3. Try use materials that naturally require help from an adult.
4. Provide some material/activities that the child can use without assistance.
5. Select material and activities that take advantage of the child's usable vision/hearing.
6. Choose materials and activities that allow the child to experience success. Provide both easy and difficult task.

**When selecting materials ask yourself:**

**Do they encourage the development of new skills?**

**Does it give the child the opportunity to solve problems and allow some control over the environment?**

### **Topic #8: Establishing guidelines for effective communication (15)**

#### **Practice this!**

##### **Guidelines:**

- 1. Let individual know you are present**
  - a. Tap shoulder or hand**
  - b. Slip hand under theirs**
  - c. Call name if hearing**
- 2. Id yourself**
  - a. Touch cues**
  - b. Name sign**
- 3. Positioning**
  - a. Height-same level**
  - b. Distance-comfortable**
  - c. Angle-close, face to face (typical), angle (less tiring than side by side) or side by side. Remember working this close can cause stress and child and impact behaviors.**
- 4. Lighting**
  - a. Well lit**
  - b. Glare controlled**
  - c. Childs back to window-you not stand in front**
- 5. Speed of signing-slow for child learning**
- 6. Clarity of sign**
  - a. Within line of sight**
  - b. Sign with strong yet gentle motions**
  - c. Don't exaggerate or make too small**
- 7. Fatigue-remember to take breaks**

**Ensure child is receiving the message correctly. Convey your understanding by signing yes, Interrupt and ask for clarification if you do not understand.**

## **Topic #9: Conveying emotions and meaning through tactile sign (10)**

**Emotions:** The child is not able to read your facial expression, vocalization, or body movement to understand your emotions. You will need to help them understand/label emotions.

First, help the child recognize their own emotions by labeling them. Begin by watching the child to see what emotions they express and then when they express it, pair the corresponding sign.

The child may be able to feel the emotions you convey in your hands through the tension/lack of tension in your hands and the manner in which you sign. Help them better understand your emotions by using your:

Voice

Body Language

Facial Expression

And labeling it.

**Meanings:** Persons who are Deaf blind are often times not able to read non-manual markers used in ASL. For example, raised eyebrow and tilting body slightly forward for a question. You will need to relay meaning through other means, such as

Questions-use the question sign to indicate you are asking a question.

Negation- Headshake no or negation-use the sign no or not

Teasing-use teasing sign

Note: (provide this information before and after the message is relayed).

### **Other considerations:**

Indexing (Emphasize nouns/names as opposed to pronouns when indexing.

Laughing/smiling/ excitement/worry-let person know when this occurs in you or others.

Let consumer know what is happening in the environment.

Change of topic sign-helps to let person know you are changing the topic.

When using sequencing, use one hand instead of two as it will be clearer.

Use exaggeration to emphasize-common complaint among consumers is tactile signing is boring.

Avoid signing in the air for signs that are made on the body.

Providing feedback as a way to facilitate communication:

Keep going- I understand-gently tap top of their hand twice

No, sign no, on top of their hand

What, gently squeeze hand and pull forward or other way.

## **Topic #10: Finger Spelling: Finger spell words with 3 letters or less. (10)**

### **Who can use Finger spelling?**

1. Students who are attentive
2. Students who have good motor control
3. Students who have a good memory for sequencing

### **Procedures:**

1. Start with formal name signs (initialized).
2. Next start with a few select words (start with individuals own name paired with name sign).
3. Select a couple of objects or people the student enjoys and pair this with the finger spelled word. Use words that are 3-4 letters, such as Dad, Mom, Ball, and Dog.
4. Help child learn the ABC's.

### **Positioning:**

- Place the student's palm toward yours and gently put their fingers down as you finger spell into their hand
- Produce the sign co-actively to help the student understand its formation.
- May need to use both hands to start but as time goes on and student improves, can go to one handed. Use student's non-dominant hand which allows the student to keep dominant hand to explore and comment.

### **SKIP Production of Manual Alphabet**

Things to know about specific letter formation and hand placement:

**G**-place your index finger and thumb between the student's index finger and thumb.

**H**-Same as above

**I**-fold your thumb under your finger or place it in front of your students' fingers or they will think it is a Y.

**J**-Place your little finger outside of the student's hand and move their hand with yours as you make the sign.

**M&N**-make sure your thumb makes contact with the students hand so they can differentiate each letter.

**P**-sign in the crease of the student's thumb and index finger.

**Z**-draw an imaginary Z against the student's base.

**Other Guidelines:**

If spelling several words, at the end of the last letter of each word, pause briefly.

If using double letters, move hand slightly from one place to another (don't bounce too much).

When first working with a student, sign slower and increase pace as student becomes more comfortable with you and you learn the student's abilities.

Clarity of sign is the biggest concern.

Ask for feedback from the student  
Keep fingernails short and remove jewelry.  
Take breaks due to fatigue.

### **Topic #11: Encourage Interaction with Peers and others (10 minutes)**

#### **Procedures:**

1. Encourage peers to play games with the Deaf-blind child.
2. Be sure peers understand the child's communication system.
3. Incorporate turn taking.

#### **Peers Benefit by:**

1. Knowing a variety of communication systems.
2. Develop an understanding of the needs of a Deaf-Blind child.
3. Build new friendships.

#### **Deaf-Blind Individuals Benefit by:**

1. Learning about social interactions and how to communicate with others.
2. Developing friendships with those their own age.

#### **Five things to consider when developing peer interaction/activities:**

1. Activities must be enjoyable and meaningful
2. Activities must develop independence in the student
3. Activities must occur frequently for learning to occur
4. Student should be allowed to interact with a variety of people (start with a few and gradually include more)
5. Use a communication system that is understandable by the public and consistent with the student's abilities. It must be:
  - a. Quick
  - b. Easy to Understand
  - c. Not require any specialized training
    - i. Tactile
    - ii. Electronic
    - iii. Pictures
    - iv. Print

#### **Overall goals:**

1. Provides opportunity to make choices
2. Provides opportunity for student to have control in their environment

## **Topic #12: Interpreting for individuals who are Deaf-Blind (10 )**

Prepare the individual for use of an interpreter by:

1. Helping them understand their right to have an interpreter and how to access one.
2. Helping them understand what skills in an interpreter they need and how to advocate for their needs. During their first meeting with an interpreter they should spend about 15 minutes:
  - a. Getting to know each other communication styles
  - b. Discussing any special needs (i.e. low vision vs. tunnel vision)
  - c. Work out any issues regarding lighting
3. Ensure they are aware of their needs and responsibilities to get them filled.
  - a. Note taker
  - b. Copies

### **Other tips:**

1. Due to fatigue issues arrange to switch interpreters every 20-30 minutes
2. Use pillow under arm/behind back.
3. Never leave a deaf blind person unattended without notice and anchoring them somewhere.

### **Qualifications of a Deaf-Blind interpreter:**

1. Use the Deaf blind consumers preferred mode of communication.
2. BE able to receive and understand the message from the consumer
3. Have the ability to use one form of communication to receive a message, understand and process it, and then relay it to the consumer.

### **Differences between interpreter for the Deaf and the Deaf-Blind consumer:**

Deaf: Convey

- Messages
- Sound

Deaf Blind: Convey

- Messages
- Sounds
- Significant information such as
  - Environmental information-layout of the room, who is there, who is speaking, if there is laughter, etc.
- Slower pace
- Condense information
- Possibly learn new skills such as 2 handed finger spelling or touch Braille
- Assist with mobility
- Provide information found on written materials