

Special Communication Needs

ARSD 24:05:27:01.02. (4) Consider the communication needs of the student and, in the case of a student who is deaf or hard of hearing, consider the student's language and communication needs, opportunities for direct communications with peers and professional personnel in the student's language and communication mode, academic level, and full range of needs, including opportunities for direct instruction in the student's language and communication mode. These considerations for a child that is deaf or hard of hearing are to ensure that local educational agencies better understand the unique needs of children who are deaf or hard of hearing.

In completing this section identify the student's current communicative level based on the "Seven Levels of Communicative Competence". In collaboration with the IEP team identify the student's current most efficient mode of communication (your strengths and needs and will identify what is communicated using this mode), the modes of communication that will be used for instructional activities, modes of communication to use in social contexts, and the areas in which the student's communication skills will be further developed.

Include the following information in this section:

- Current level of communication (based on the "Seven Levels of Communicative Competence")
- Identify current and most-efficient mode of communication,
- Identify mode/s of communication to use for instructional activities,
- Identify modes of communication to use in social contexts,
- Describe the best way to communicate with the student,
- Identify areas to target for communication skill development

Examples:

- Student communicates primarily at the nonconventional pre-symbolic level with emergent skills developing at the conventional pre-symbolic level. She currently uses vocal sounds (pleasure sounds and screams) to communicate protest (cries when toy falls to ground) and happiness (when music plays on her toy) and the use of echolalia. She will primarily verbalize to herself, not attempting to engage a communication partner in her verbalizations. She will also occasionally reach for, use gestures, and look at desired objects. She uses pointing, gesturing, matching, and visual discrimination with up to one distracter to communicate during instructional activities. She is further developing her communication skills by using a picture exchange method, vocalizations and gestures. She uses objects, photos, and picture symbols as part of her total expressive communication program.
- Student is a non-verbal communicator. He works on making choices between two items. He will also push things away if he does not want them, or reach for items he wants, for example reaches for a lights and siren truck that he may want or throwing Lego blocks

off of his lap tray that he does not want to have. He is working on using objects and object cards to communicate.

- Student communicates at the Intentional (Proactive) Behavior level. He will push away items he does not want and will reach/look at visually stimulating items. He cries when upset and will make a soft vocal sound when happy. He uses pointing, reaching, eye gaze, and pushing items away to communicate during instructional activities and well as single-switch voice output devices. He uses single switch voice output to communicate pre-programmed messages during social activities. He is further developing his communication skills by interactants providing attention to all potential communicative behaviors and providing a verbal label to the communicative intent. Objects paired with pictures are also used to promote choice making.
- Student communicates at the Pre-Intentional Behavior level. Student is non-verbal and communicates via facial expressions, body language (change in body tone) and vocalizations (crying). She utilizes voice output devices to participate in school subjects such as math, science, language, group computer. She requires verbal and physical prompts to access her switch. She is further developing her communication by creating an environment that is responsive and acknowledges changes in facial expressions, body language and vocalizations (for example, when she smiles you label "I see you smiled. Do you like the picture" or Child is grimacing and you say your face is frowning does something hurt?")
- Student communicates at the Formal Symbolic Communication Level. Student is nonverbal and uses a single micro-switch with her right thumb to activate a DynaVox speech-generating device and eye gaze to communicate. She also uses facial expression (looking up= "yes" and looking down = "no"). When she is upset or annoyed, she will squint her eyes, produce raspberries, and/or produce tears. Facial expression is limited secondary to profound hypotonia. She is further developing her communication by increasing vocabulary, on task behavior, and fluency in auditory scanning.

7 Levels of Communicative Competence

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LEVEL	SALIENT BEHAVIOR
I. Pre-Intentional Behavior	Pre-intentional or reflexive behavior that expresses state of subject. State (eg., hungry, wet) is interpreted by observer.
II. Intentional (Proactive) Behavior (Not intentionally communicative)	Behavior is intentional, but is not intentionally communicative. Behavior functions to affect observer's behavior, since observer infers intent..
III. Non-conventional Pre-symbolic Communication	Non-conventional gestures are used with intent of affecting observer's behavior.
IV. Conventional Pre-symbolic Communication	Conventional gestures are used with intent of affecting observer's behavior.
V. Concrete Symbolic Communication	Limited use of concrete (iconic) symbols to represent environmental entities. 1:1 correspondence between symbol and referent.
VI. Abstract Symbolic Communication	Limited use of abstract (arbitrary) symbols to represent environmental entities. Symbols are used singly.
VII. Formal Symbolic Communication	Rule-bound use of arbitrary symbol system. Ordered combinations of two or more symbols according to syntactic rules.

7 Levels of Communicative Competence

Communication Modes Associated with Each Level of Communication
From Rowland & Stremel-Campbell (1987)

Communication Level	Vocal/Speech	Motor/Gestural	Electronic Technology	2- and 3-dimensional Symbols
Level I Pre-intentional behavior	Cry Gurgle Coo Grunt	Head and limb movements Postural changes Facial expressions		
Level II Intentional behavior	Fuss Babbling sounds	Gaze at object Smile Avert head Approach object Move away from Push away Take object	Contingency awareness (not communication)	
Level III Unconventional pre-symbolic behavior	Laugh Whine Scream	Eye contact Manipulate person	Calling device	
Level IV Conventional pre-symbolic Communication	Intonated sound patterns Vocalizations accompany gestures	Alternating gaze Shrug Open palm Hands up/out Point Extend object	Two-choice option Yes/no option	

		Nod/Shake head Wave Kiss/Hug/Pat Raise hand Touch object, person		
Level V Concrete symbolic communication	Mimic sounds of objects	Iconic gestures (mine, come, sit) Pantomime action, object	Selection of concrete 2- or 3-dimensional symbols	Concrete 2-dimensional symbols Concrete 3-dimensional symbols
Level VI Abstract symbolic communication	Single spoken words	Single manual signs	Selection of abstract symbols	Abstract shapes Abstract graphics Written words Braille words
Level VII Formal symbolic communication (Language)	Combinations of 2 or more spoken words	Combinations of 2 or more manual signs	Selection of combinations of 2 or more symbols	Combinations of 2- and 3-dimensional symbols