

Refer-A-Friend Informational Packet

Acceptance. Change. Access.

Teaching individuals with motor difficulties to coordinate their brain and body to communicate by spelling.





Spelling To Communicate

- Spelling to Communicate teaches individuals with motor challenges the purposeful motor skills necessary to point to letters to spell as an alternative means of communication.
- The goal is to achieve synchrony between cognition and motor.
- Skilled and rigorously trained communication partners teach purposeful motor skills using a hierarchy of verbal and gestural prompts.
- Teaching and motor practice centers around engaging cognitive lessons.
- Motor skills progress along an increasingly complex hierarchy from pointing to letters to typing independently on a keyboard.
- Communication moves from concrete to abstract as motor skills progress.
- Once students have achieved the motor skills for autonomous communication, the focus expands to develop whole body purposeful movement for daily living and achieving personal goals.
- Integration of cognitive and motor skills leads to improved physical and emotional regulation.
- Communication and motor control lead to improved access, quality of life and opportunities to be contributing members of society.



Standards of Practice

Support the neurological differences that are a natural part of us. Recognize that we all learn and communicate differently. Celebrate students and embrace people as they are with unconditional acceptance.

Students and practitioners are partners. Either may be the Subject Matter Expert and/or teacher.

Advocate for understanding: Speech and Language are not the same. Speech is motor. Language is cognitive. Provide sound educational instruction coupled with strategies to support alternative avenues for demonstration of expressive language.

Presume competence “even before” students: 1) show what they know 2) symbolically and effectively communicates 3) shows cause and effect 4) are judged to be “severely” anything.

Advance the skill acquisition for those who spell to communicate. Encourage the development of skilled communication partners within the student’s family and educational support network. Support student progression toward independent communication and/or transfer of skillset to multiple communication partners with whom a student can learn and grow.

Support the application of ongoing skills for those who spell to communicate in ways that are commensurate with same age peers who speak to communicate. Advocate for reciprocal benefits of inclusive education and social environments for our students.

Meet the student where they are and encourage exploration of the environment. Implement Visual, Auditory, Kinesthetic and Tactile (VAKT) multi-sensory learning strategies to align instruction with cognitive preference.

Ensure authentic, student-centered learning environment that maintains flexibility to accommodate changes in daily practice. Acquisition and application of communication opens new doors to learning and increasing independence.

Embrace a culture of continuous learning to enhance professional practice. Review student progress, clinical best practices and a growing body of research to enhance services offered.

Communicate using ‘Identity First Language’ that is inclusive of any students who may seek services at GKTC: non, minimal, unreliable speaking students.

Engage critically and respectfully with one another. Value each individual’s voice and feelings as equally important.

1. 'What Is Neurodiversity?' John Elder Robison, William & Mary Neurodiversity Initiative

2. <http://www.hussmanautism.org/praxis-and-autism-bridging-the-gap-between-intention-and-action/>

3. <http://www.cherylmjorgensen.com/upload/Mass%20Down%20Syndrome%20Conference%202012%20Jorgensen%20Presentation.pdf>

4. <http://tash.org/advocacy-issues/inclusive-education/>

5. <http://www.nea.org/tools/47003.htm>

6. Thorpe, H. Borden, K.S. The Effect of Multisensory Instruction Upon the On-Task Behaviors and Word Reading Accuracy of Learning Disabled Children. Journal of Learning Disabilities. Mary, 1985. Vol 18, Issue 5.

7. Daley, Barbara J. (Summer, 2000). Learning in Professional Practice - New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education v2000 n88: 33-42

8. <http://autisticadvocacy.org/home/about-asan/identity-first-language/>



AUTISM FROM THE TRIBE'S PERSPECTIVE

The term “nonspeaking” is intended to describe individuals who cannot speak, or who are minimally or unreliably speaking.

THE TRIBE

“Tribe” is a group of nonspeaking autistic young adults who are bound together by their friendship, similar way of communicating (by Spelling to Communicate), and passion for advocacy. These autistic self advocates are working to debunk the many misconceptions about autism and to spread autism acceptance in the local community and beyond through education and outreach. Most recently, their efforts have led to a collaboration with University of Virginia undergraduates in a seminar titled The Science and Lived Experience of Autism.

HOW IS NONSPEAKING AN INCLUSIVE TERM?

“It refers to all individuals who do not have reliable speech to communicate.”

“Don’t call what comes out of my mouth speaking. If you spewed nonsense gibberish you would not want to call that your speaking.”

“What comes out of my mouth is unreliable.”

“Even if it makes sense it’s not what we mean to say.”

“How we wish we had control to say what we want.”

“My laugh and speech is repetitive phrases and is not indicative of my intelligence.”

Continue onto back...



WHAT IS THE BRAIN BODY DISCONNECT?

"The body brain disconnect is truly the issue for nonspeaking autistics."

"Body brain disconnect means not being in control of your body."

"We are capable of thinking but not making our bodies do what we want them to do."

"The brain body disconnect is like having a pilot on a plane that's not following the instructions. You want Hawaii. The plane is taking you to Antarctica."

FACTS ABOUT NONSPEAKING AUTISM FROM NONSPEAKING AUTISTICS

"We are intelligent."

"We are not obsessed with one thing. We love learning all things."

"We love being social but our bodies don't let us show that."

"We are intelligent and capable of learning."

"We still have a lot to say."

"We have thinking brains but uncooperative bodies."

INCLUSION

"Never mind our bodies. Our brains are what matter. They are always interested, always craving knowledge, we love interesting conversation. No matter the outsides, the insides love meeting new people."

"To my peers, all I want is respect and understanding. We are not that different in our minds."

"Ignore the cover of this book"

"Give me a chance. I may just turn out to be someone you like."

"Please give us the opportunity to show you that we are funny, caring, smart and a lot like you, but gifted with bodies without boundaries."

"Never mind our bodies. Our brains are what matter. They are always interested, always craving knowledge, we love interesting conversation. No matter the outsides, the insides love meeting new people."



Additional Resources

Blog article

Diagnosis Disruption:
Debunking the Myths of
Non-verbal Autism

[READ ARTICLE](#)

Video

