

Language Functions and AAC – Teaching Commenting

The ability to share our thoughts is powerful! We share comments to connect with others. Sharing comments and opinions can help develop a sense of personal autonomy.

Early comments to teach:

- “I like”, “I don’t like”, “I see...”, “Look”
- Describing words (e.g., “It feels/looks/smells/tastes/sounds...”)

How to Teach it:

- Model making comments throughout the day.
- Model comments lots of times in many different contexts and in different places.
- Have different communication partners model comments.
- Notice what has your child’s attention and model a comment based on the focus of their attention.
- Model how to navigate their AAC to help them find the words they need to make a comment.
- After you have modeled comments many, MANY, MANY times, start pausing to invite your child to try to use their AAC to comment.

Tips:

- KEEP IT FUN and STRESS FREE - You want your child to keep a positive feeling about their AAC system.
- Show genuine interest in your child’s thoughts and opinions - intentionally ask them.
- Make it meaningful to your child - do something, have an experience, and then talk about it.
- Make comments during and after reading a story or watching a video together.

Reminders:

- Your child communicates in many different ways. Be sure to honor all their communication. If your child comments in another way (e.g., gestures), model it on their AAC and then respond.
- Communication is not a test. Do not make your child comment more than once or in multiple ways.
- AAC users often do not get as many opportunities to comment or share opinions. Conversations and interactions tend to move too fast. Untrained communication partners might not realize the need to adjust the pace to include your child. We need to help teach AAC users ways to claim their turn in conversations. And ways to remind communication partners to pause and wait.
- Do not insist on them using a complete sentence.
- There are many reasons we communicate (language functions).
- Communication is about connecting and relationships.
- Focus on connecting and interacting with your child.

*Adapted from www.nwacs.com