Scaffolding Story Scripts

Personal Stories - Sharing with Others

WHAT? Musselwhite & Burkhart (2001) wrote a book, *Can We Chat? Co-Planned Sequenced Social Scripts,* describing how to work with an individual who uses AAC to co-construct social scripts.   One category of these scripts is 'Conversation Scripts' which include story scripts. We all love telling stories of our lives. However, for individuals who use AAC, this may be extremely difficult because:

a) They may still be learning the language on their communication systems;
b) They may be learning how to share oral narratives;
c) The speed of communication may not be fast enough to successfully share a story with sufficient detail.

WHY STORY SCRIPTS? Page 4 of the *Can We Chat* book summarizes why social scripts in general are useful for people who use AAC. They also explain how social scripts (especially story scripts) can positively influence social agendas (as described by Janice Light (1988, Interactions involving individuals using AAC Journal). This includes social closeness. Telling stories about our lives can:

• <u>Enhance a sense of belonging</u> (for example, as one student shared how he dressed as the Hulk at a winter carnival, other students shared their stories about dressing up as characters);

• <u>Show aspects of the personality</u> (for example, showing humor in a story or telling about a prank may expose previously hidden personality traits);

• <u>Change perceptions</u> (for example, Dimitri talked about kayaking, and Evelyn told of her experience adaptive skiing – both of those stories changed perceptions of both peers and teachers).

WHO IS THIS FOR? Story scripts are ideal for students who have experiences to share, but don't currently have the language to generate stories to share the experiences. It is important not to wait until students are 'ready' because sharing stories about our lives is such a powerful event.

HOW TO MAKE IT HAPPEN:
Parts of A Story Script. KISS = Keep It Simple, Silly!!! Musselwhite & Burkhart suggest these parts to a script (pp. 7 – 8):

• <u>Attention-getter</u>. It's important to get a partner's attention before jumping in.

• <u>Starter</u>. The starter gives a clue about what's coming. Sometimes it's fun to have a 'teaser' first, followed by the actual starter. For example, "You'll never guess where I went!" followed by: "I'll give you clues." Followed by clues (outside, cold, family) and the answer (skiing).

• <u>Maintainers</u>. Have 2 – 4 parts of the story. No need to overdo it. Give enough parts to keep people interested without droning on! For example, if you're telling a story about going to a movie, you could share the movie title, who you went with, your favorite part, and/or
 the snack that you ate.

• <u>Closing</u>. Be sure to have a clear ending to your story script. It's important for people know when you're done, so they don't feel rude by turning away or walking off.

Making It More Engaging. Here are a few tips to make the Story Script more engaging and more interactive.

• <u>Include Turn Transfers</u>. Turn the conversation over to your partner. For example, after sharing that he dressed up as the Hulk, Lucas asked, "Who's your favorite character?" Try to ask open ended questions, rather than yes / no questions, for maximum interaction! This is also powerful because it's a natural way to teach conversational turn-taking!

Who is **your** favorite character?

• <u>Use Humor</u>. For example, at the end of his kayak story, Dimitri and a friend are crashing on a bench with his Mom.
The caption reads, 'We also played 'Squash the Mom.' Do you ever play that?"

• <u>Involve the Student in Creating Story Scripts</u>. Students can help choose parts such as: photos to include, the attention getter / closing; and comments about each picture. For example, Sadie chose underlined words for several of the images in her story about going to Cozumel with her family.

I made new friends! They are <u>cool</u>!

We played beach volleyball.

Do you know what the balls were??

They were **water balloons!** I got <u>super</u> wet!

Guess who made our bracelets?

My friend Tessa made them! They are <u>epic</u>!

Tools for Story Scripts. Most high-tech AAC systems can easily be modified to create Story Scripts. Here are a few tools that work especially well for creating Story Scripts with images. Note Sadie's *Pictello* 'weekend stories' across the years.

TapSpeak Sequence app

TalkSuite app

Pictello app