

## Make A Real Choice

# Make a REAL Choice!

*'Make a REAL choice, then make it your voice.'*

Caroline Ramsey Musselwhite

**WHAT AND WHY:** Too often, students with significant disabilities are handed a single-message device to 'talk on demand'. That is, they have not CHOSEN what to say, but are simply asked to give a response that a partner has recorded. I call this 'the flyswatter', as the student is just swatting at a switch with NO communicative intent!

Consider the following messages, and judge whether the child made a REAL choice:

- A) Today is Wednesday
- B) Let's watch the dog video
- C) I want to sit by Shannon
- D) Cloudy
- E) I think that book is silly

Chances are that anyone reading this would recognize that A & D are 'pseudo-choices'. That is, if the student picks 'Friday' we will correct them, and record Wednesday instead.

Beware of . . .

the



flyswatter!!

**WHO IS THIS FOR:** Real choices MUST be for every individual with whom we work. We must stop asking students to 'Dance for Grandma', answering questions that are not authentic, and offering information that is already known. For example, we can all look out the window to determine that it is cloudy, so that is a question with a known response! This situation of asking 'fake' questions and recording redundant information is of greatest concern for students who:

- Are (or are perceived to be) cognitively young
- Have only one reliable switch site
- Do not have a rich language set available.

### HOW TO DEAL WITH THIS ISSUE:

#### Replace 'Fake' Questions With Real Questions.

When asking questions, or recording messages on a single-switch device, ask yourself:

- 1) Is this a real question??

Remember, fake questions have a pre-determined answer. They are really TEST questions!!

#### The QUESTION Test

?

Real??

Or Fake??



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- 2) If you find yourself asking numerous fake questions, replace them with real questions. For example, you could ask a young student to select the song that will be shared during Circle Time, and record her response. An older student could be asked to share his review of a 3-minute movie trailer.



## Make Sure Students Have Enough LANGUAGE to Make Real Choices!

### High Tech SGD



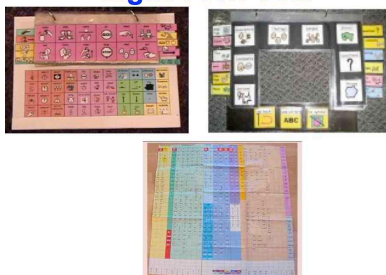
**High Tech SGDs.** Ideally, students will have or be in the process of getting speech generating devices with extensive and well-organized language. These high-tech systems will permit students to generate messages that can be shared. However, due to funding, access, and other issues, many students will not have access to these devices.

**PODD:** Increasingly, students are using PODDs, Pragmatic Organisation Dynamic Displays, developed by Gayle Porter & Linda Burkhart. These language sets offer an extensive vocabulary, so that students can make choices, share novel ideas, and communicate interactively. PODD sets are often used by students with significant access issues. Therefore, messages created using PODD may be shared with the group via a single message device.

<http://www.lburkhart.com/podd.htm>



### Light Tech Sets



### Light Tech Sets:

A number of light tech sets are available to support students in making choices for sharing using single message devices. For a review of sample sets, see the AAC Intervention Tips:

- August, 2010: Light Tech Symbol Sets
- May, 2011: Light Tech Sets & Literacy

**REMEMBER! Single-message devices are NOT a system!!!  
But, they can help a student share great ideas!**