

Supporting Multi-Modal Communication

Talking with Your Whole Body!

WHAT AND WHY: Neurotypical speakers use a wide range of strategies to communicate including gestures, facial expressions, and vocalizations. Many individuals who use AAC also use some or most of these forms of so-called 'nonverbal' communication. And many individuals who don't currently use some of these strategies can learn to use them, especially when they recognize the value of **all** forms of communication. Additionally, teaching students to use multi-modal communication can help them learn to recognize gestures, facial expressions, and vocalizations of others.



WHO IS THIS FOR: This is for anyone who communicates with people who use AAC, including parents and other family members, peers, teachers, paras, and therapists.

HOW TO MAKE IT HAPPEN:

Develop Cognitive Clarity. It's important that individuals who use AAC understand what each of these forms of multi-modal communication are, and why they are important.

Gestures. For example, Marika is using her communication device to give a short talk to the class. She has pre-programmed messages, and is saying them one at a time. Her brother helps her practice how to add a few gestures (thumbs up, fist pump) to really add emphasis to her statements.



Facial Expressions. For Eliana, just pointing out the facial expressions she was already using – surprise, humor, and annoyance, and letting her see them in the mirror was very effective in getting her to think about how her face could really help her make her messages clearer.

Vocalizations. While some students who use AAC have many words that can be understood by selected partners, some may not have many intelligible words. However, many individuals can use vocalizations that really add power to their conversations. For example, Kareem naturally uses vocalizations that clearly indicate humor, annoyance, or agreement. We pointed those out and (with his permission) recorded them so that he could hear for himself the power they gave to his communication.

