

Active Listening: Link to Literacy

WHAT: This strategy is designed to support students in being 'active listeners', filling their 'non-obligatory turns'. See the March, 2010 Tip of the Month, 'Active Listening' at www.aacintervention.com for more information. Briefly, this strategy helps individuals who use AAC to listen carefully to a conversation, and be a full participant by using:

- Positive comments (ex: cool, awesome, wow, congratulations!)
- Negative comments (ex: oh no, bummer, darn, rats)
- Neutral comments (ex: well, okay, huh, really)

This tip helps students practice using active listening during book-reading. Thus, during a group reading activity, students call out positive, negative, and neutral comments in response to the events in the story.

WHO IS THIS FOR: This strategy is for individuals who are not already filling their 'non-obligatory turns.' For example, if a partner says, I went to a cool movie yesterday, and the person who uses AAC simply smiles and nods, they are not verbally filling that turn. Using active listening during book-reading is especially helpful for students who are trying to figure out **how** to respond, based on conversational context. For example, I have found this especially useful for students with autism spectrum disorder. The story context, pictures, and text help support figuring out whether events should be responded to with a positive, negative, or neutral comment.

LOGISTICS:

Choosing / Storing / Recording Comments: First, re-read the Active Listening tip, and the sample comments above, and ensure that the person can quickly access one or more positive, negative, or neutral comments. Factors to consider:

- Comments should be chosen by the AAC user
- Partners (especially peers!) can give ideas
- Consider having peers record comments, for higher engagement

Choosing Books: Books should be selected that include at least two good and bad events, so that the student will have opportunities to use their positive, negative, and neutral comments. Samples are suggested on the following pages. Many of the books from *Learning to Work* are ideal for this purpose (2009, Musselwhite & Richardson, www.attainmentcompany.com).

How To Scaffold Learning: The before / during / after chart on the following pages provides a step-by-step guide to completing this activity.

ACTIVE LISTENING: Comments

Overall Goal: Help readers learn to listen so that they can make comments that are appropriate to the text and pictures in a book.

Materials:

Younger Students: Just My Friend And Me book by Mercer Mayer

Older Students: stories from Literacy Starters (Don Johnston) such as:

When Your Work Is Done (Settlers set)

www.donjohnston.com

Stories from Learning to Work by Attainment (Musselwhite & Richardson, 2009) www.attainmentcompany.com Samples include:

'Good News Bad News' or 'Next' (Food Set)

'No Problem' or 'The Coke' (Hospital Set)

'Perfect for the Prom' or 'Growing Pains' (Garden Set)

Cards representing comments (positive, negative, neutral)

Unity™ cards representing comments (AWESOME / OKAY / OOPS).

Before Reading Activity:

Tell students, "We're going to re-read our story about friends. Sometimes, when we watch TV or listen to stories, we talk about things that are good."

- *Model:* "So, if you see or hear something really good, you might say COOL (showing word / picture / Unity card, or modeling on device).
- *Prompt:* A facilitator could whisper ideas in the student's ear, use a squeeze flashlight, etc (see prompting ideas on Overview Handout).
- *Make A List:* As students share ideas, write them on chart paper, or attach cards. Put them in categories. Good / Bad / Okay (for older students, you might talk about positive / negative / neutral).
- *Re-Read the List:* Point out patterns (e.g., "Look! Lots of the words start with the INTERJECTION icon."

Clear Purpose for Reading / Listening: "Listen so you can use these words (point to list) to talk about the book."

During Reading: Read the story. Stop only two or three times to remind students . . . "Remember, you're listening to talk about the book. When a student has a comment, a facilitator should write the comment on a Post-It, and place it on that page. Don't stop for discussions - just react quickly and move on.

After Reading: Say, 'You guys were really listening. You showed me that you were listening by your comments!! Let's look back to see what you said about the book . . . Hmm, on this page (playing with racing cars), Lizzy said OOPS and Aaron said COOL. Let's talk about that. Lizzy, can you show me why you said OOPS? (no answer) . . . Was it because Little Critter said, 'They don't work very well in the water'?
Give clear evaluative feedback about several of the comments.