



# **Executive Function Scaffolding for Students with Complex Communication Needs: Receptive Communication Strategies**

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# My Background

Speech-language pathologist specializing in AAC since 2008

- Easter Seals Chicago Autism Therapeutic Day School (federal level 5)
- Saint Paul Public Schools
  - Bridge View School (federal level 4)
  - district AT team
- All Voices Augmentative Communication (private practice)
  - in-home AAC services in the Twin Cities metro area
  - all ages

# Land Acknowledgement

I am based out of Saint Paul, Minnesota. I live and work near Bdote Mni Sota (the confluence of the Minnesota and Mississippi rivers). Bdote Mni Sota, according to the Dakota creation story, is where the Dakota people (the Seven Fires of the Dakota) first came to the earth.

Learn more about the Dakota:

[Dakota Wicohan website](https://dakotawicohan.org/) (https://dakotawicohan.org/)

[Bdote Memory Map](http://bdotememorymap.org/) (http://bdotememorymap.org/)

Books by Native authors and illustrators:

[AICL best books lists](https://americanindiansinchildrensliterature.blogspot.com/p/best-books.html)

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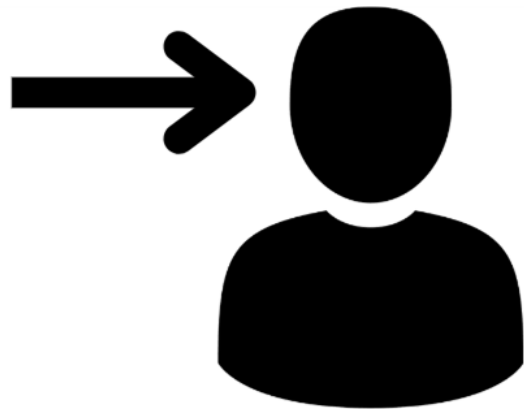
# Outline

- Foundation
- Scaffolds
  - Stimuli
  - Processing Time
  - Supports
- Final Notes
- Discussion

# Foundation: Receptive vs. Expressive Communication

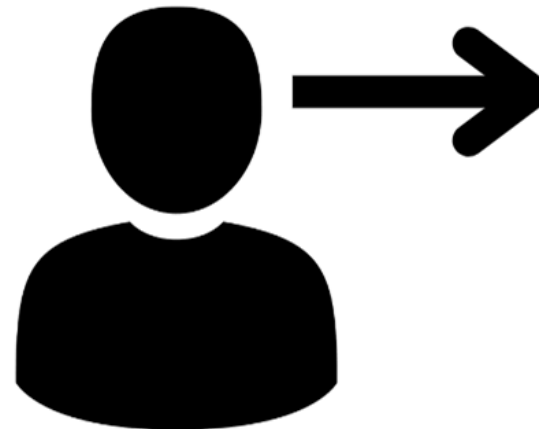
## Receptive Communication

Speech and language information a person takes in and interprets



## Expressive Communication

Speech and language messages a person expresses



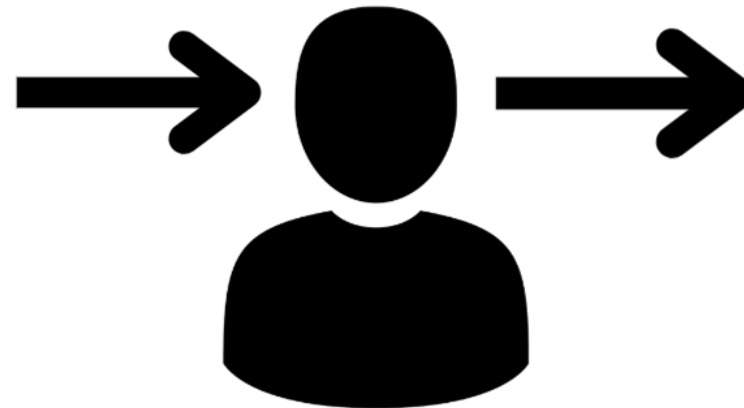
# Foundation: Receptive vs. Expressive Communication, continued

## Receptive Communication

Speech and language information a person takes in and interprets

## Expressive Communication

Speech and language messages a person expresses



# Foundation

Language Processing is Hard!



## **Foundation, continued**

**Success, growth, and learning are possible for every person.**



# Foundation: Bridge View Sign



# Scaffold: Decrease Stimuli, Focus Stimuli

Executive functions you are scaffolding:

- self control, inhibitory control
- working memory
- planning

## Scaffold: Decrease Stimuli, Focus Stimuli, continued

**Auditory stimuli** and strategies to decrease excess sources of noise

- music, fans, hallway noise, cell phones
  - stop and listen to what you may have tuned out
  - noise blocking headphones, FM systems
- staff chatter
  - subtle signal to staff when they are getting chatty or commenting too much during lesson
  - “review the footage”

## Scaffold: Decrease Stimuli, Focus Stimuli, continued 2

### Visual and physical stimuli, and strategies to decrease

- people coming in and out of the classroom
  - plan beginning/ending of staff breaks
  - place sign on classroom door
- student personal space
  - set a standard of respecting personal space as much as possible
  - be aware of touching students; leaning on their wheelchair, desk, chair

# Scaffold: Decrease Stimuli, Focus Stimuli, continued 3



[Canva.com](https://www.canva.com)

**30 second stretch break**

# Scaffold: Provide Adequate Wait Time

Executive functions you are scaffolding:

- organization
- mental flexibility
- planning
- task initiation

## Scaffold: Provide Adequate Wait Time, continued

Make it a norm to provide adequate wait time

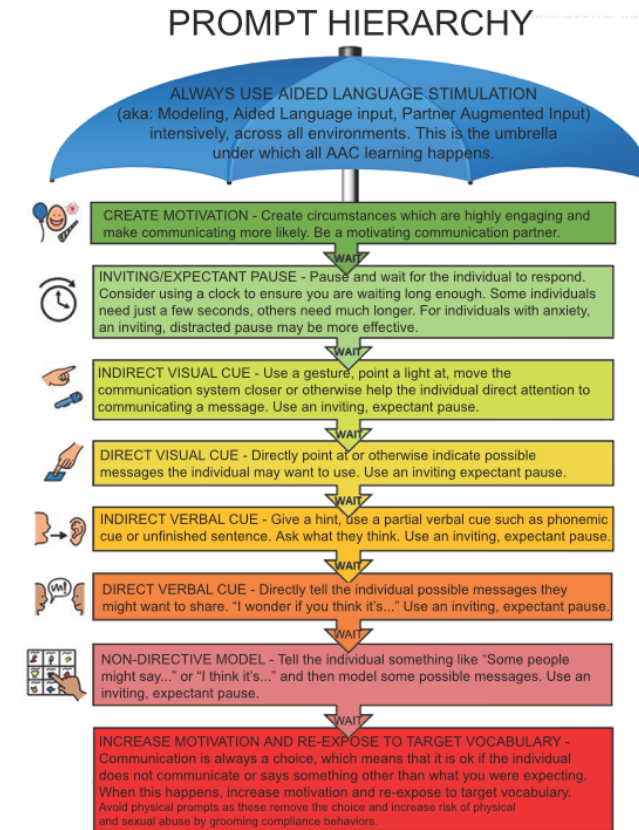
- Count to ten in your head
- Get classroom staff on board
  - sign or hand signal to show other staff that you are waiting and not to prompt or talk



# Scaffold: Provide Adequate Wait Time, continued 2

## Prompting

- wait to prompt
- you definitely can and should prompt less than you do
- know your prompt hierarchy
  - [Kate Ahern's prompt hierarchy](http://bit.ly/3xC1E0p) —> (http://bit.ly/3xC1E0p)



## Scaffold: Provide Adequate Wait Time, continued 3

- Give whole classroom group wait time before asking students to respond
  - set a short timer if needed
- pause more, slow down speaking rate
- No time for wait time?
  - shorten or simplify your lesson

# Scaffold: Multimedia Supports

Executive functions you are scaffolding:

- mental flexibility
- working memory
- organization

# Scaffold: Multimedia Supports, continued

## Tools

- visual timers
- symbols, photos, videos
  - include appropriate adaptations (e.g. objects or tactile symbols, closed captioning)
- sign language
- core words

## Scaffold: Multimedia Supports, continued 2

Clear and simple presentation

- simplify language
- simplify tasks
- minimize clutter

# Scaffold: Multimedia Supports, continued 3

(Clear and simple presentation)

**Animals in Alaska**

Which fact matches each animal?  
Draw a line.

**Puffin**

**Moose**

**Red Fox**

**Husky**

**Bald Eagle**

**Arctic Fox**

**A** My fur is usually red but my tail always has a white tip.

**B** I am a part of a team of dogs that pulls a sled.

**C** I'm a bird that can swim underwater.

**D** In winter, my fur becomes thick and white.

**E** My tall legs and wide hooves help me walk in deep snow.

**F** My wings can be 8 feet across when I spread them out.

[pbskids.org/molly](http://pbskids.org/molly)

KEY: A: Red Fox, B: Husky, C: Puffin, D: Arctic Fox, E: Moose, F: Bald Eagle

# Scaffold: Multimedia Supports, continued 4

(Clear and simple presentation)

**Animals in Alaska**  







Which fact matches each animal?  
Draw a line.

	Puffin	<b>A</b> My fur is usually red but my tail always has a white tip.
	Moose	<b>B</b> I am a part of a team of dogs that pulls a sled.
	Red Fox	<b>C</b> I'm a bird that can swim underwater.
	Husky	<b>D</b> In winter, my fur becomes thick and white.
	Bald Eagle	<b>E</b> My tall legs and wide hooves help me walk in deep snow.
	Arctic Fox	<b>F</b> My wings can be 8 feet across when I spread them out.

[pbskids.org/molly](http://pbskids.org/molly)

KFC, A. Red Fox, B. Husky, C. Puffin, D. Arctic Fox, E. Moose, F. Bald Eagle

Match the picture to the description

 puffin
 moose
 red fox
 husky
 bald eagle
 arctic fox

Large mammal with antlers

Large bird of prey with white head and brown body

Dog trained to pull sleds

Mammal with fluffy red and white tail

Bird with grey and red orange beak

Mammal that is all white and lives in cold places

## Scaffold: Multimedia Supports, continued 5

Provide clear explanations, directions, demonstrations

- know each student's strengths and help them use them
- use multimodal instruction, engaging multiple senses/modes
- model concepts and task execution



# Final Notes: The first step is the hardest

Pick one strategy and work at it until it is a habit, then add the next to your repertoire.

First step ideas:

- always hold off on prompting for 10 seconds
- give group wait time/silence for 10 seconds
- simplify and shorten one lesson
- develop a “quiet” signal with classroom staff
- help each other remember not to lean on student wheelchairs

## Final Notes: Send it home

You're doing the work, you're seeing results...share that success with the whole team, especially parents and home caregivers. If they're open to it, help them figure out how to carry it over at home.



**Thank you!**

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