STRATEGIES FOR PROMOTING EARLY COMMUNICATION SKILLS

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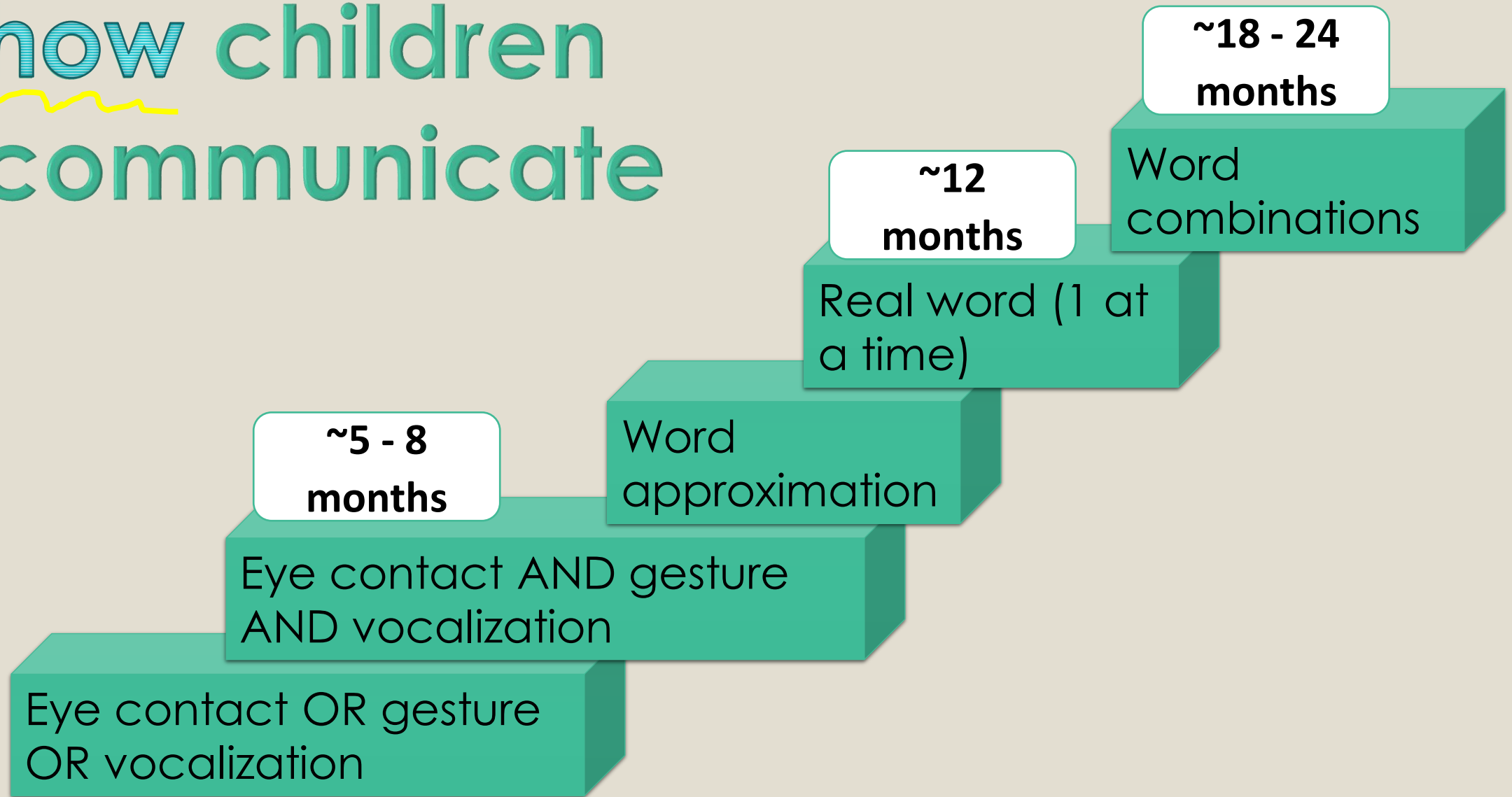2021 ASK Conference

Learning outcomes

◦ Use information about **typical communication milestones** to guide observations of children

◦ Identify **evidence-based contexts** for working on communication skills

◦ Describe and demonstrate several **evidence-based strategies for promoting children's communication**

◦ Identify **resources for continued learning** on this topic

TYPICAL COMMUNICATION MILESTONES*

*Brief overview!

how children communicate

~5 - 8 months
Eye contact OR gesture OR vocalization

Eye contact AND gesture AND vocalization

Word approximation

~12 months
Real word (1 at a time)

~18 - 24 months
Word combinations

(Crais et al., 2004)

why children communicate

~8 – 12 mo

Joint attention

Example: Pointing at airplane & looking at mom

Communicating to share interest in something with somebody

Example: Reaching for milk & vocalizing

Communicating to ask for an object or action

Requesting

Social interaction

Example: Putting hands over face to play peek-a-boo

Communicating to draw attention to self

(Crais et al., 2004)

Video example

Overview: 1ˢᵗ year

| 2 – 4 mo | 4 – 6 mo | 6 – 8 mo | 8 – 12 mo |

2 – 4 mo
- Coos & laughs
- Makes sounds in response to speech
- Responds to familiar voices with a smile
- Gazes at eyes & faces

4 – 6 mo
- Plays with sounds, single syllables (e.g., "ba")
- Finds source of sounds

6 – 8 mo
- Babbles with many syllables, tries to imitate sounds (e.g., "bababa")
- Knows his/her name & familiar words
- Explores objects

8 – 12 mo
- Makes jargon sounds
- Understands 3 – 50 words
- Follows simple instructions (10 mo)
- 1ˢᵗ words (12 mo)
- Communicates intentionally (10 mo)

(Bowen, 1998; Crais, 2001; Crais et al., 2009; Kennison, 2006; Kephart et al., 2003, Paul & Norbury, 2012; Retherford, 2000; Nelson, 2011; Vig, 2007)

Overview: 2ⁿᵈ year

12 –18 mo

- Uses 50 – 100 words
- Consonant & vowel
- Understands 1-step commands
- Understands body parts
- Looks at objects that are named
- Communicates for many reasons & in many ways
- Puts together & takes apart objects
- Uses objects how supposed to be used
- Simple pretend play to self

18 – 24 mo

- Uses 200 words (words more than gestures)
- 2-words together
- ~50% intelligible
- 2 consonant sounds in 1 word
- Understands 2-step commands
- Identifies pics in book
- Finds objects out of sight
- Simple pretend play to others
- Sequences pretend play

(Bowen, 1998; Crais, 2001; Crais et al., 2009; Kennison, 2006; Kephart et al., 2003, Paul & Norbury, 2012; Retherford, 2000; (Nelson, 2011; Vig, 2007)

Overview: 3rd year

24 – 30 mo

- Uses 500 words (some adjectives)
- Starting to have conversations & be polite
- Tells stories by naming & describing
- Teases, lies
- "What, where, who" (rising intonation)
- Starting to use grammar (e.g., -ing, in, on, plural –s)
- "No, not, can't, don't" in phrase/sentence
- "Gonna, wanna, gotta, hafta"
- Starting to understand rhyming
- Understands simple picture stories
- Pretend play

30 – 36 mo

- 3+ words together
- Adds new info to conversations; sometimes clarifies
- Stories = sequence of events (no plot)
- Over-generalized past tense (e.g., "runned")
- 2 verbs together (e.g., "can sing")
- Pronouns
- ~75% intelligible
- Can make rhymes
- 10 different consonant sounds
- Understands & uses "Why"
- Spatial vocabulary (in, on, under, etc.)
- Pretend play

(Bowen, 1998; Crais, 2001; Crais et al., 2009; Kennison, 2006; Kephart et al., 2003, Paul & Norbury, 2012; Retherford, 2000; Nelson, 2011; Vig, 2007)

Overview: 4th year

36 – 42 mo

- Uses 800 words
- Complex sentences
- Questions with right word order
- Irregular past tense, articles (a, the), possessive –s (e.g., Mom's)
- May have hard time with "s, r, l, th, sh" and 2 consonants together (e.g., "sp" in "spoon")
- Understands & uses words about color, kinship, compare/contrast, cause & effect, time
- Polite requests
- Story events in correct order
- Symbolic play

42 – 48 mo

- Clauses in sentences
- Many ideas together into one sentence
- Easier time with 2 consonants together (e.g., "spoon")
- Understands & uses "When & how"
- Shape words
- Size words
- And, because
- Symbolic play

(Bowen, 1998; Crais, 2001; Crais et al., 2009; Kennison, 2006; Kephart et al., 2003, Paul & Norbury, 2012; Retherford, 2000; Nelson, 2011; Vig, 2007)

Overview: 5th year

48 – 60 mo.

- Uses 2,000 words
- 5 – 6 words together
- "When, so, if because"
- Easily answers "wh" questions
- Easily describes things & events
- Basic sentence structures
- Regular past tense, "be" verbs, third person –s (e.g., walks)
- Clauses in sentences
- 100% intelligible
- Speech mostly error-free (still could be hard: "s, r, l, th, sh")

- Letter names & sounds
- Numbers & counting
- Hints at things ("that smells yummy…")
- Clarifies
- Tells stories with plot
- Responds to requests for information & follows instructions
- Symbolic play

(Bowen, 1998; Crais, 2001; Crais et al., 2009; Kennison, 2006; Kephart et al., 2003, Paul & Norbury, 2012; Retherford, 2000; Nelson, 2011; Vig, 2007)

For more information:

○ https://www.asha.org/public/speech/development/chart/

○ You can also find this site by searching online: "How does your child hear and talk ASHA"

COMMUNICATION CONTEXTS*

*Brief overview!

Effective contexts for working on communication

- **When do you start?**
  - The earliest age possible
- **How frequently do you work on communication?**
  - Incorporate teaching opportunities all day, 5 days/week, 12 months/year

(Frost et al., 2020; Prelock, 2017)

STRATEGIES FOR PROMOTING COMMUNICATION

Overview

Starting **Responding** **Expanding** **Creating opportunities**

STARTING

Example

Strategy: Observe

- **Play to observe:**
  - What the child is <u>looking at</u>
  - What the child is <u>touching</u>
  - <u>How</u> the child is playing

- **Communication to observe:**
  - <u>How</u> the child is communicating
  - <u>Why</u> the child is communicating

Why?
Observing will help you figure out how to interact with the child

(Frost et al., 2020)

Strategy: Get face-to-face

Why?

Easier for child to:
- Make eye contact
- Pay attention to you
- Read your expression
- Direct communication to you

(Schriebman et al., 2015; Frost et al., 2020)

Strategy: Follow the child's lead

Why?

- The child is already interested in the activity
- Interest = attention
- Attention = child can learn from you!

(Frost et al., 2020; Schriebman et al., 2015)

Strategies: Summary

Starting

- Observe
- Face-to-face
- Follow lead

Video examples

RESPONDING

Examples

Strategy: Respond as though the child meant to say something

Why?

- Responding to the child's <u>meaning</u> = more communication from child

(Frost et al., 2020; Mahoney and MacDonald 2007)

Strategy: Model how you would like the child to communicate

Why?

- Modeling provides a positive example for what the child should be doing
- Takes pressure off the child to "perform"

◦ **Who provides the model?**
  - Best choice: A preferred peer
  - Also effective: Teacher, therapist, parent, <u>puppets</u>, etc.

(Frost et al., 2020; Mahoney and MacDonald 2007)

Strategy: Be animated!

Why?

- Excitement & joy = attention
- Attention = chance for learning!
- Animated communication also provides an example for the child

(Frost et al., 2020; Mahoney and MacDonald 2007; Rosin, 2017)

Strategies: Summary

Starting
- Observe
- Face-to-face
- Follow lead

Responding
- Respond as if meaningful
- Model
- Be animated

Video examples

EXPANDING

Example

Strategy:
Imitate the child

Why?

- Gives the child control
- Catches the child's attention
- Brings the activity to the child's level

(Frost et al., 2020; Mahoney and MacDonald 2007)

Strategy: Expand 1-step above

Why?

- Shows child a more advanced way of communicating
- Easier for child to imitate you at a step "within their reach," rather than several steps above

Remember: Next steps could be <u>how</u> OR <u>why</u> communicating

(Frost et al.,2020; Mahoney and MacDonald 2007; Rosin, 2017)

Strategy: Ask fewer questions

Why?

- Takes pressure off child to "perform"
- Encourages you to provide more models
- Encourages you to communicate less so that the child communicates more

(Mahoney and MacDonald 2007)

Strategies: Summary

Starting	**Responding**	**Expanding**
• Observe • Face-to-face • Follow lead	• Respond as if meaningful • Model • Be animated	• Imitate • Expand 1-step • Ask fewer ?s

Video example

CREATING OPPORTUNITIES

Examples

Strategy: Communication Teasers

Hard to open

Too high up

Missing a piece

Doesn't fit

"Forget" the next line or step in a routine

Surprise! What's inside??

(Schriebman et al., 2015)

Strategy: Offer choices

Why?

- Gives child control
- Gives opportunity to communicate
- Offers an example of what to say

(Schriebman et al., 2015)
(Mahoney and MacDonald 2007)

Strategy: Time delay

Why?

- Gives child a chance to communicate

(Frost et al, 2020; Mahoney & MacDonald, 2007; Sam & AFIRM Team, 2015a)

Strategies: Summary

Starting	Responding	Expanding	Creating opportunities
• Observe • Face-to-face • Follow lead	• Respond as if meaningful • Model • Be animated	• Imitate • Expand 1-step • Ask fewer ?s	• Teasers • Choices • Time delay

Video example

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

Summary

| Communication milestones | Context |

Starting
- Observe
- Face-to-face
- Follow lead

Responding
- Respond as if meaningful
- Model
- Be animated

Expanding
- Imitate
- Expand 1-step
- Ask fewer ?s

Creating opportunities
- Teasers
- Choices
- Time delay

Video example

RESOURCES

Resources

- ASHA: How does your child hear and talk?
  - https://www.asha.org/public/speech/development/chart/
- First Words Project:
  - https://firstwordsproject.com/
- National Professional Development Center: Evidence-Based Practice Modules
  - https://autismpdc.fpg.unc.edu/evidence-based-practices
- Autism Navigator
  - https://autismnavigator.com/
- Advancing Social-communication And Play (ASAP) intervention:
  - https://www.med.unc.edu/ahs/asap/resources/

Local referrals

- **North Carolina Infant-Toddler Programs**: http://www.beearly.nc.gov/
  - Children's Developmental Services Agencies (CDSAs)
- **School District Referrals (3 years+)**
  - Chapel Hill – Carrboro Schools
    - http://www.chccs.k12.nc.us/group_listing.aspx?id=5598BD94-5C85-4F07-92E8-D81384F08165
  - Navigate from EC page to Preschool Intervention and to Referral Process

- Durham Public Schools
  - http://www.dpsnc.net/about-dps/departments/exceptional-children-1/child-find
- Orange County Schools
  - http://www.orange.k12.nc.us/academic_dept_pages/exceptional_ch.html
- Wake County Public Schools
  - http://www.wcpss.net/what-we-teach/services/special-ed.html

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QUESTIONS?