

AAC and Errorless Co-Construction of Language: Making Language Real

John M. Costello
Director, Augmentative
Communication Program
Children's Hospital Boston
John.costello@childrens.harvard.edu



Language development

- language learning proceeds uniformly within and across linguistic communities despite extensive variability of the input provided to individuals

• The invention of language by children: Environmental and biological influences on the acquisition of language. In Gleitman, L., & Liberman, M. (Eds.), *Language: An invitation to cognitive science* (2nd edition). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.



This is true for all languages and gestural codes BUT is also based on the fact that the child can USE language



My motivation:

- IEP goal (ugh):

Johnny will communicate a choice from a field of three symbols with 80% accuracy

Johnny will identify the appropriate symbol from a field of three symbols given verbal prompts

Johnny will match a symbol to a like referent with 80% accuracy



How about...

- Johnny will experience the power of language and the meaning of a symbol through creative and supported exploration of language



In addition:

- Phrase based communication system
- Encoding instruction is very 'language arts/ curriculum' based, and fun and function is removed
- Communication support focuses on curriculum and personal needs.



Tools needed:

- A bunch of symbols/photos with velcro on back
- A Veltex board
- Eye gaze from for those unable to direct access
- A white board
- Color makers
- Toys/objects to match your symbols
- imagination



Patient photos or videos



Patient photos or videos

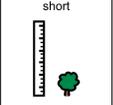


Patient photos or videos



Patient photos or videos



cat 	outside 	see 	
	play 		short 
cow 	green 	shoes 	cricket ball 

Vocabulary selected



there was a

short

cow

with

green

shoes

and he was

lookING

outside

at a

cat

playiNG

with a

cricket ball

Vocabulary 'enhanced'

Patient photos or videos

Cha
To

Patient photos or videos

Patient photos or videos

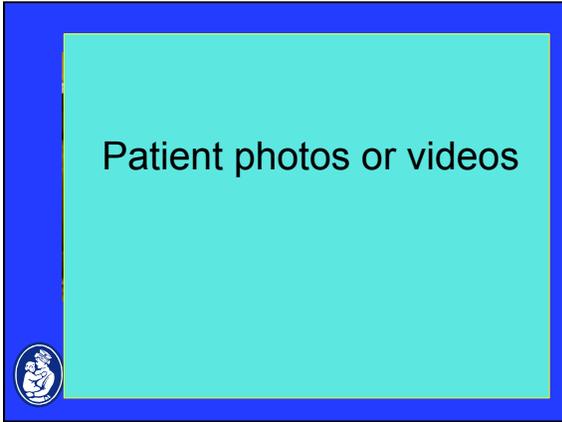


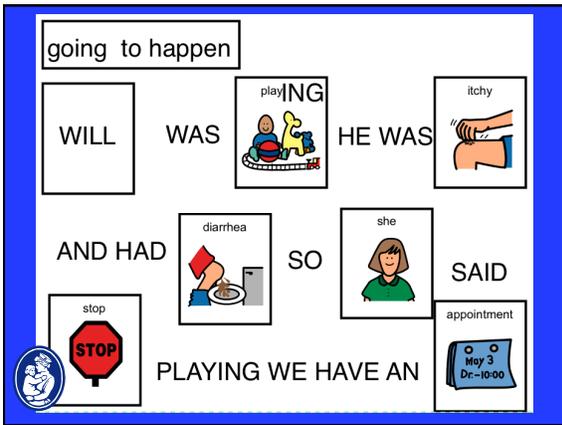
she 	going to happen 	itchy 	diarrhea 
WILL 	play 	appointment 	stop 

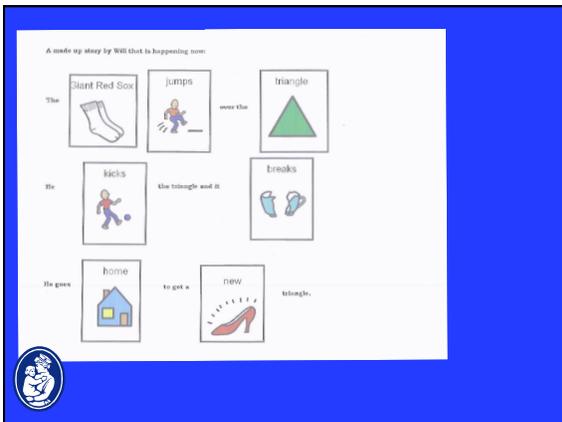


Patient photos or videos









This is something to see → pretend → people → John → actions → get → things → photo → of you, Will

William is this pretend? no
 William is this for real? Yes
 Are you saying I want to give John a photo of me? Yes

Will's use of language AFTER repeated errorless Co-construction experience

Patient photos or videos

This task may support focus on:

- Inventively manipulating language
- Experimenting with change in meaning based on change in word order
- Focus on left to right orientation
- Using language for imaginary purposes
- Create a novel utterance that is static and may be used to re-tell a story
- Begin creation of a self-authored story book
- Make abstract language more meaningful by drawing and acting out
