Partner Interactive Strategies

- Observe student as he/she interacts with familiar partners (teachers and specialists)
- Determine what makes it possible for the student to communicate effectively
- Familiarize yourself with the vocabulary available in the AAC systems
- Maintain focus on the student at all times
- Position yourself for face-to-face interaction with the student.
- Encourage and support communication
- Validate all forms of communication: Verbal Speech, Gestures, Eye gaze, Facial Expressions, Proxemics, Low Technology Communication, Lite/Mid Technology Communication, High Technology Speech Generating Devices
- Resist the urge to interpret, embellish, and talk for the child
- Try not to "predict" what they are going to say
- Give them an opportunity to say what they want to say in their own words
- Interact with the student at a level appropriate to his/her chronological age.
- Minimize your focus on the AAC Tools your student is using. Don't let the tool get in the way of communication.
- Recognize that the students' communication tools may be limited and that they may make the most out of the system they have and use vocabulary flexibly to convey meaning.
- Let them know exactly what you need clarification on when you are uncertain about what is being communicated.
- Elicit more information to assist in resolving the communication breakdown.
- Restate the "utterance" and ask the student to confirm/deny the intent.
- Respond to what the student is saying and not "how" the student is saying it.
- Use a variety of open-ended questions, statements, and comments, and elicit communication and language from the student.
- Avoid asking yes/no questions. Partners can take away the student's control by asking yes/no and forced choice questions only.
- Make communication your priority and sacrifice your agenda.
- Expect a response
- Go slow; Pace yourself in accordance with the student's communication rate.
- Wait for a response
- Monitor the number and quality of opportunities provided throughout the day.
- Students will communicate about what interests them. Let them be in control. Help them say what THEY want to say.
- Talk about what they feel or think, not just about what they want.
- Provide opportunities for the student to communicate directly with peers and do not serve as a "translator"
- Stop Talking. Give the student a chance to speak and monitor how much you as the partner dominate the interaction. Speak less and require more from the student.

Buzolich, M.J. *The AAC Classroom: Creating an Educational Environment to Support Unity Users*. Pittsburgh AAC Language Seminar Series, Pittsburgh, PA, April 18, 2012.

- Keep track of what you said so when the student finally produces a response you can determine if the response was related in some way to your previous utterance
- Do not walk away from the student when they are formulating a response to your question, statement, or comment.
- Wait patiently and do not try to "fill the space" with unnecessary speech
- Convey a positive attitude toward the student, believe in their ability to learn and to communicate
- Collected a Communication sample including what the student generated with his communication device and make a note of the interactive setting, context and the partner's response. Collect only spontaneously generated language and communication when sampling.
- Take seriously your role as a person who enables them to communicate