Deaf Blind: Interactions with Objects

PowerPoint Slides to be used in conjunction with the Facilitator’s Guide
Session Agenda

- Introduction
- Session Goals and Objectives
- Communication Representation- Receptive and Expressive
- Selecting Objects
- Functions of Objects
- Developing Interactions
- Objects in Routines Summary
- Evaluation
Introduction

• This session is designed to provide a common understanding of how to create a meaningful and motivating system through which a learner experiencing deafblindness can interact with others and her environment via objects.

• Play the audio narrative found at http://mast.ecu.edu/modules/db_2/lib/media/photo01-video.html
Introduction, continued

• As we listen to this audio narrative, imagine that these are the thoughts of one of your learners.

• You have observed her enjoying the exploration of objects, both those familiar and those not.

• You also know that objects can serve as a way to complement speech and manually signed communication to anticipate events, express likes and dislikes, make comparisons or connect to past events.
Introduction, continued

• But what else about your learner do you need to take into account?
• What should the objects look like and with which ones do you begin?
• When and how will your learner use them?
• With these reflections in mind, you begin your endeavor to create a more meaningful and communicative life for your learner.
Session Goal

• Goal: to gain the necessary information to create a meaningful and motivating system through which a learner experiencing deafblindness can interact with others and her environment via objects.

• The session will explain the continuum of communicative representation, considerations when selecting objects, and why and how objects might be used by a learner throughout her day.
Session Objectives

Participants will be able to:

1. Identify the levels of communicative representation on a continuum.
2. Identify considerations when selecting objects for communication.
3. Compare the possible communicative functions of objects.
4. Identify sequential steps in developing communicative interactions using objects.
5. Identify examples of daily routines for a learner which meaningfully infuse the use of objects.
Communication Representation—Receptive and Expressive

• For any learner with deafblindness, communication (i.e. receiving and sending messages) is critically important:
  – These individuals may have residual (remaining) vision and/or hearing;
  – However, the blend of this dual sensory impairment hinders the degree to which they acquire information about objects at a distance by just seeing and hearing.
Communication Representation, continued

• Viewing a communication map may be helpful in understanding how receptive communication, or the receiving of and comprehension of messages, is made possible.

• These communication forms move from a basic to a more complex level of representation.
Communication Representation, Activity

• Look at the slides and listen to the accompanying narratives about Receptive Communication at http://mast.ecu.edu/modules/db_2/lib/media/slides01.html and Expressive Communication at http://mast.ecu.edu/modules/db_2/lib/media/slides02.html
Communication Representation, Activity continued

- Divide into small groups; half focus on receptive and half on expressive communication. Consider one communicative function (such as requesting a story or informing about wanting to go to bed). Give examples of a technique at each stage of the map, moving from basic to more complex, consistent with function.
Communication Representation, Activity continued

- Remember that a learner may need a variety of communication forms within and between both maps.
- Depending upon abilities and needs, the learner might receive messages from sign language and pictures because her vision allows such; however, messages might be sent by pointing to pictures rather than sign language because of motor issues.
Selection of Objects - Learner Considerations

• Let’s assume that after reviewing the communication maps, you believe that the learner is a candidate for use of three dimensional items or objects versus two dimensional items such as photos or drawings.

• When selecting objects as a means of interacting, communicating and engaging, certain characteristics must be taken into consideration in order for success.
Learner Considerations, continued

• The type of object should be influenced by the learner’s hearing, visual, motor, and cognitive abilities.

• Input from family and professionals can help answer questions as to what objects might work best for the learner.

• As a team responds to these questions, a more complete picture of the learner and the learner’s needs can be determined.
Learner Considerations, continued

– Is the learner totally deaf?
– Is there usable hearing?
– Is the learner totally blind?
– Is there usable vision?
– The visual and hearing abilities of the learner may help establish the size of an object, whether it ought to have auditory feedback or what its color and contrast should be as compared to the surrounding environment.
Learner Considerations, continued

– How cues are presented must also be based on the learner’s visual and auditory abilities.

– For example, if a learner’s peripheral vision is compromised, objects need to be presented directly in front of the learner at a distance appropriate to abilities.
Learner Considerations, continued

– What is the best position for a learner with deafblindness and motor disabilities to respond to, access and utilize objects?

– For example, the motor abilities of a learner may determine if an object needs to be placed in the hands or if it is expected that the learner will reach and grasp for the object. Additionally, motor skills may influence whether a pointing response, eye gaze, or touching is an effective means to access and respond to an object.
Learner Considerations, continued

– What are the cognitive abilities of the learner?

– Is interest shown in objects?

– Is there reaction to certain objects?

– To use objects as a method of interacting, the learner must be able to associate a meaning to the object.

– Consider beginning with an object that is very concrete to the learner, perhaps even used within a routine. The less a symbol resembles what it stands for, the more abstract it is.
Learner Considerations, continued

– When determining how closely a symbol represents an activity, place, person or action, it is crucial to reflect on how the learner perceives that activity, place, person or action and not how it is perceived by you.

– For instance, a piece of sandpaper could signify a woodshop class because you have seen sandpaper used in a woodshop class. But if a learner never uses sandpaper within the class, it will not have much meaning in representing that activity.
Learner considerations, Activity

• In small groups, develop a descriptive profile of a learner with deafblindness:
  – can be based on a real person with whom you are already familiar or can be fabricated;
  – include specifics about the extent of learner’s sensory impairment and cognitive abilities.
  – The learner profile will be used in future activities.
Selection of Objects – Object Considerations

• In addition to considering the characteristics of the learners, it is important to also consider the characteristics of the object being considered for use.
  – Is the object **meaningful** to the student?
  – Objects can be presented as a whole or partially or in a more abstract form.
  – Some learners require a whole object versus parts of objects in order to gain an understanding.
Object Considerations, continued

- For instance, a learner recognizes that a jump rope represents recess but a piece of the rope or the handle attached to a card might be confusing for this same learner.
- Be aware of how the child perceives object characteristics and what meaning is being drawing from them.
Object Considerations, continued

• Real life objects that are used within an activity can certainly be used as a reference to a daily routine.
Jon enjoys walking to a local convenience store to get a smoothie. The object used to signal that activity is his refillable plastic sports bottle which he will actually use for this pastime.
Object Considerations, continued

• Another option is selection of objects not used within the activity.
• This distances the object from the actual activity, thus, making it more abstract in nature.
• Examples:
  – a rubber handle of a bike to symbolize a tandem bike riding activity,
  – part of a straw attached to a background to represent a drink.
Object Considerations, continued

- When utilizing parts of objects as cues, must be sure they are something the learner sees or feels or hears as part of the activity. If they are not experienced by the learner, the objects will be more difficult to understand.
Jason enjoys physical education class. He has a whistle mounted on a piece of card that indicates ‘p.e. class’. The whistle stays on the card and Jason does not actually use it during the class period.

Caution must be taken to make the distinction between the object symbol and the actual referent. For instance, a portion of a Styrofoam swim flotation aid can be attached to a contrasting cardboard backing or a piece of plexiglass to distinguish it from the actual flotation aid that is used in a water aerobics class.
Miniature objects have been used as symbols in the form of doll house furniture or charms designed for key chains.
Object Considerations, continued

• To use miniatures effectively, the learner must have the visual and cognitive abilities necessary to comprehend their meaning.
Object Considerations, continued

• Using miniatures can have disadvantages:
  – Never use miniatures with a learner who is blind. Learners without sight or poor residual vision may not be able to recognize the correlation between a miniature and the object that it looks like. Using a plastic bathtub made for a dollhouse has no similarity to the sensations that a learner receives while bathing.
  – Even if a learner has good vision, there is still need to possess fairly sophisticated cognitive skills to recognize the relationship between a miniature and actual object, especially if the difference in size is vast.
Abstract objects can be used as references as well.

A wristband attached to a board next to the door might represent an outdoor activity. When the learner wants to engage in that activity, the learner can go to the door, retrieve the wristband, and hand it to a caregiver who responds accordingly. It is abstract in that the wristband is not actually used in any outdoor activity and is not necessarily related to any outdoor activity but still represents the out of doors.