



TN-TAN
TENNESSEE TECHNICAL
ASSISTANCE NETWORK

Understanding the Relationship between Behavior and Communication in the Classroom

For students with Complex Communication Needs

Speaker



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Tennessee Technical Assistance Network (TN-TAN)

provides school districts, administrators, educators, and families access to high-quality training, resources, and supports designed to improve outcomes for students with disabilities, ages 3-22.



Intensive Behavior

TRIAD at Vanderbilt University Medical Center provides technical assistance for complex behavior support needs and associated training. Supports include direct instruction for staff on behavior assessment and intervention implementation, as well as ongoing coaching to help students engage within their least restrictive environments.



Preschool

AnLar assists in building capacity and systems to support meaningful access to preschool for students with disabilities. Supports include strategic action planning, professional development, leadership coaching, preschool program evaluation and support implementing evidence-based practices in inclusive settings.



RTI²-A+RTI²-B

Tennessee Tiered Supports Center assists districts and schools as they build and implement an aligned student support system. The center provides training, coaching, and resources for building an aligned framework for tiered academic and behavioral supports.



Autism

TRIAD at Vanderbilt University Medical Center provides training, consultation, and coaching services designed to support educators in their classrooms and develop school and system-wide supports to address needs specific to students with autism spectrum disorder (ASD).





BEST FOR ALL

We will set all students on a path to success.

ACADEMICS

ALL TENNESSEE STUDENTS WILL HAVE ACCESS TO A HIGH-QUALITY EDUCATION, NO MATTER WHERE THEY LIVE

STUDENT READINESS

TENNESSEE PUBLIC SCHOOLS WILL BE EQUIPPED TO SERVE THE ACADEMIC AND NON-ACADEMIC NEEDS OF ALL STUDENTS IN THEIR CAREER PATHWAYS

EDUCATORS

TENNESSEE WILL SET A NEW PATH FOR THE EDUCATION PROFESSION AND BE THE TOP STATE TO BECOME AND REMAIN A TEACHER AND LEADER FOR ALL

Today's Objectives



- Relate how communication differences may impact a student's behavior
- Explain why a student may exhibit challenging emotional or physical behaviors as a way to communicate
- Distinguish among supports and strategies that can impact a student's communication and behavior in the classroom based on how we understand their behavior

**Understanding Communication:
Jot down the communicative
behaviors you observe.**

Video source: YouTube. Talking Twin Babies (February 2011). America's Funniest Home Videos.

Reflect: What is Communication?

Communication is a process by which information is exchanged between individuals through a common system of symbols, signs, or behavior.

Miriam-Webster

Understanding Communication and Behavior

- Many students with autism engage in challenging behaviors including aggression and SIB*.
- Many students with challenging behavior also have differences in their communication and social communication abilities.
 - Verbal and non verbal communication differences
- These communication differences can make it more difficult for effective communication.
- Communication breakdowns are a key component to understanding many challenging behaviors.

* Edelson SM. Comparison of Autistic Individuals Who Engage in Self-Injurious Behavior, Aggression, and Both Behaviors. *Pediatric Reports*. 2021; 13(4):558-565. <https://doi.org/10.3390/pediatric13040066>

Students communicate using a variety of *behaviors*.

Some reasons students communicate

Communicative Behaviors

Words
Gestures
Facial expressions
Pictures
Body language
AAC

Students use these ***behaviors*** to communicate for a variety of reasons

Physical behaviors

Emotional behaviors

Telling us

What they want/ like
What they don't want/ don't like
How they feel
They don't understand

Asking us

For help
For a break
For information

Sharing information

About themselves
About what they like and don't like

When students exhibit challenging emotional or physical behavior, they are likely trying to communicate something to us



Students will use physical and emotional behavior to communicate when

- they don't yet have a more symbolic way to express themselves.
- they are overwhelmed or dysregulated and can't access more symbolic communicative behaviors.
- they don't understand expectations or what is being communicated to them.
- their communicative behaviors are misunderstood or are not being honored.

REFLECT



- Think of a time you noted that a student engaged in a challenging behavior or became dysregulated due to a communication breakdown.
- Close your eyes and try to picture the event ***from the student's perspective.***

Practice

Antecedents	Behaviors	Understanding	Skills to teach/ Accommodations
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student does not have a safe symbolic way to communicate • Student's communication was not honored • Student has become dysregulated and cannot access safe symbolic communication • Student does not understand what is expected of them 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teach safe symbolic communication • Honor student's current communication • Use visuals to make the environment more predictable and understandable • Teach student to self-regulate • Have AAC available and model use of AAC
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This resource was developed by TRIAD consultants and made available at no cost through the Tennessee Department of Education, Tennessee Technical Assistance Network. Triad.vumc.org/schools, 2023



VANDERBILT KENNEDY CENTER
Treatment and Research Institute
Autism Spectrum Disorder



Antecedents	Behaviors	Understanding
<p>Student is told his time is up on the computer.</p>	<p>Student cries, yells, and falls to the floor.</p>	<p>Student has become dysregulated and cannot access more safe and symbolic communication.</p>
		<p>Student's communication was not being honored.</p>
		<p>Student does understand what is expected of him.</p>

Antecedents	Behaviors	Understanding	Skills to teach/ Accommodations
Student is told his time is up on the computer	Crying, falling to the floor, yelling	<p>Student does not have a safe symbolic way to communicate</p> <p>Student's communication was not honored</p> <p>Student has become dysregulated and cannot access safe symbolic communication</p> <p>Student does not understand what is expected of him</p>	<p>Teach safe symbolic communication</p> <p>Honor student's current communication</p> <p>Use visuals to make the environment more predictable and understandable</p> <p>Teach student to self-regulate</p> <p>Have AAC available and model use of AAC</p>
Student gets stuck on how to play his game on the computer and teacher points to tell him what to do	Yelling, screaming, hitting, pointing to screen	<p>Student does not have a safe symbolic way to communicate</p> <p>Student's communication was not honored</p> <p>Student has become dysregulated and cannot access safe symbolic communication</p> <p>Student does not understand what is expected of him</p>	<p>Teach safe symbolic communication</p> <p>Honor student's current communication</p> <p>Use visuals to make the environment more predictable and understandable</p> <p>Teach student to self-regulate</p> <p>Have AAC available and model use of AAC</p>
Student is told he needs to do his work	Turns away from work, tries to hit peer, cries	Student does not have a safe symbolic way to communicate	<p>Teach safe symbolic communication</p> <p>Honor student's current communication</p>

Antecedents	Behaviors	Understanding
<p>Student gets stuck on how to play his game on the computer and teacher points and tells him what to do.</p>	<p>Student yells, cries, points to screen, and tries to hit teacher</p>	<p>Student does not have a symbolic way to communicate.</p>
		<p>Student has become dysregulated and cannot access more safe and symbolic communication.</p>
		<p>Student's communication was not being honored.</p>

Antecedents	Behaviors	Understanding	Skills to teach/ Accommodations
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How would you understand this behavior?

- A) Student does not have a safe symbolic way to communicate
- B) Student doesn't understand what is expected of him
- C) Student's communication was not being honored
- D) Student has become dysregulated and cannot access safe a symbolic communication

Antecedents	Behaviors	Understanding
<p>Student is told he needs to do his work.</p>	<p>Student turns away from work, vocalizing, and tries to hit peer.</p>	<p>Student does not understand what is expected of him.</p>
		<p>Student's communication was not being honored.</p>
		<p>Student has become dysregulated and cannot access more safe and symbolic communication.</p>

How would you understand this behavior?

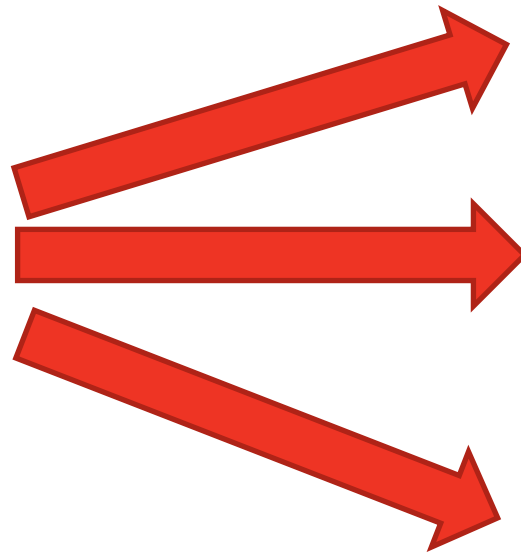
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Antecedents	Behaviors	Understanding
<p>Student is offered his favorite object – a toy duck.</p>	<p>Student hands it back, vocalizes, gestures, and to pinch, and bites the duck.</p>	<p>Student does not have a symbolic way to communicate.</p>
		<p>Student's communication was not being honored.</p>

Antecedents

Behaviors

Understanding



Accommodations

Skill Building

Strategies

Students will use physical and emotional behaviors to communicate when

- they don't yet have a more symbolic way to express themselves.
- their communicative behaviors are misunderstood or are not being honored.
- they are overwhelmed or dysregulated and can't access more symbolic communicative behaviors.
- they don't understand expectations or what is being communicated to them.

We can help by

- teaching and practicing more symbolic ways to communicate (skill building).
- honoring the student's communication at their current communication level whenever possible (strategy).
- creating an environment which is understandable to the student (accommodation).
- helping the student learn to self-regulate and have augmentative alternative communication (AAC) supports available to the student, regardless of typical communicative level (skill building and accommodation).

Skill building: Teaching and Practicing More Symbolic Ways to Communicate

- Remember, there are many forms of communication. So, if a student does not have the spoken words to express himself or herself, we must ensure they have a consistent and successful form of communication to use.
- Sometimes a student has not been taught to use a communication system. Sometimes an AAC device isn't charged. Other times, the pictures the student uses may be on a shelf they cannot reach. Improving access to a communication system is imperative. A student must **ALWAYS** have access to their system – this is their voice!



Strategy: Honoring the Student's Communication at Their Current Communication Level Whenever Possible

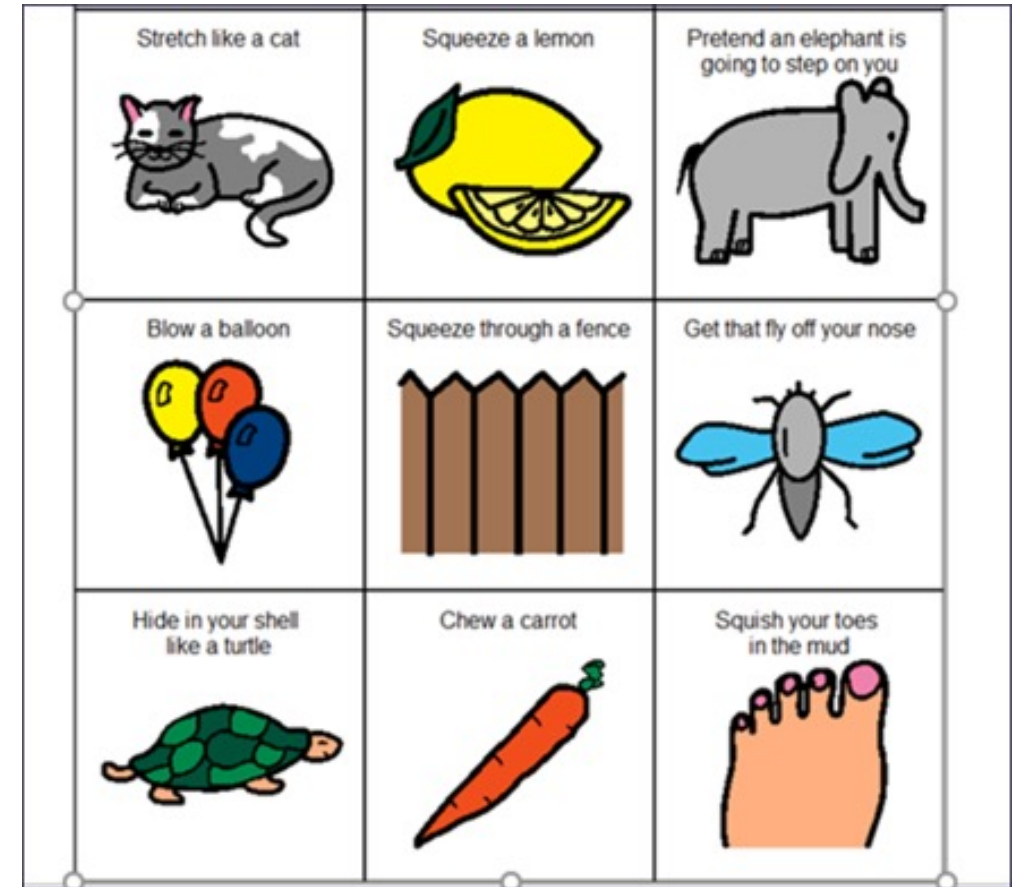
- Learning the student's current communication profile and what cues they send when they start to become overwhelmed
- Responding to those cues and modeling more commonly understood methods to communicate them
- Respecting what the student needs in the moment and providing it whenever possible
- Providing visual supports for the student to communicate more effectively

Video source: TRIAD. All rights reserved

Accommodation: Creating an Environment Which is Understandable to the Student

- Provide visuals when expecting a response
- Visual and other external cues around transitions and expectations
 - visual schedules
 - timers
 - first-then board
 - one-more-minute card
 - lights
 - bubbles
 - music cues
 - token economies

Skill building: Help the Student Learn to Self-Regulate.



Accommodation: AND have AAC Supports Available to Student Regardless of Typical Communicative Level

- Choice boards
- Communication books
- Electronic AAC
- Visual supports to express internal states

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<p>Student is told his time is up on the computer.</p>	<p>Student cries, yells, and falls to the floor.</p>	<p>Student has become dysregulated and cannot access more safe and symbolic communication.</p>
		<p>Student's communication was not being honored.</p>
		<p>Student does understand what is expected of him.</p>

Accommodations, Skill Building, Strategies

Use visuals to make the environment more predictable and understandable.

Teach to self-regulate.

Antecedents	Behaviors	Understanding	Skills to teach/ Accommodations
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		<p>Student's communication was not being honored.</p>

Accommodations, Skill Building, Strategies

Have AAC available/model use of AAC

Honor student communication whenever possible

Teacher safe and symbolic ways to communicate message

Teacher student to self-regulate

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		<p>Student has become dysregulated and cannot access more safe and symbolic communication.</p>

How could we address this communication breakdown?

- A) Use visuals to make the environment more predictable and understandable
- B) Honor the student's communication whenever possible
- C) Have AAC available/ model use of AAC
- D) Teach symbolic communication
- E) Teach the student to self - regulate

Accommodations, Skill Building, Strategies

Use visuals to make the environment more predictable and understandable

Honor student communication whenever possible

Have AAC available/model use of AAC

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Accommodations, Skill Building, Strategies

Teach safe and symbolic ways to communicate message

Honor student communication whenever possible

Have AAC available/model use of AAC

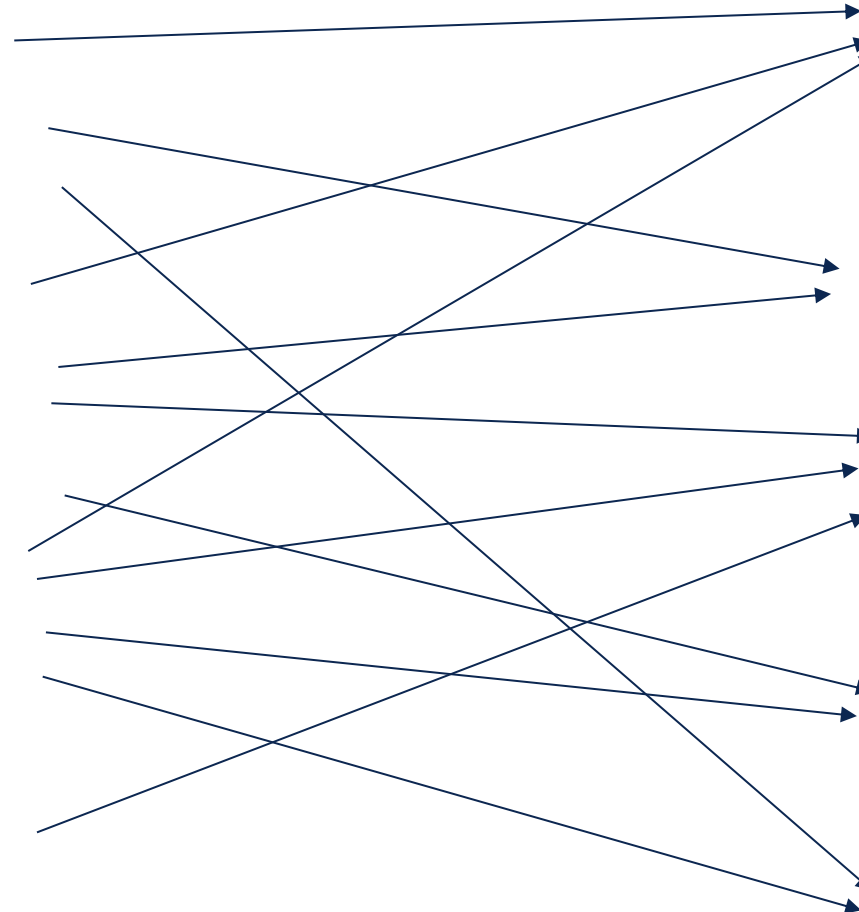
Take Away: Mix and match depending on student

Student does not have a safe symbolic way to communicate.

Student's communication was not being honored.

Student has become dysregulated and cannot access more safe and symbolic communication.

Student does not understand what is expected of him.



Teach safe and symbolic ways to communicate message.

Honor student communication whenever possible.

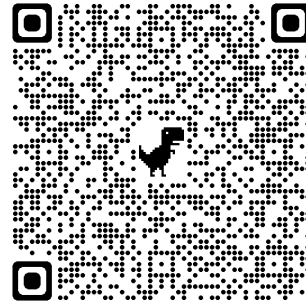
Use visuals to make the environment more predictable and understandable.

Teach student to self-regulate.

Have AAC available/ model use of AAC.

Identify a next step to continue your learning.

- Set up a VKC Learning account to access learning modules (vkclearning.org/) including modules on AAC and behavior and communication



- Learn more about Tennessee talks at tennesseetalks.org
 - Tennessee Talks will work directly with schools at no cost to assist support students, school staff, and parents interested in learning more about AAC

Take Aways

- Jot down one big idea you learned today.
- Jot down one small step you might make based on this learning.
- Jot down the next step you want to make in your learning.



RESOURCES



- VKCLearning.org
 - Building Blocks of Communication modules
 - Teaching Communication Skills: A Toolkit for Educators
 - AAC Module
 - AAC and Restrain and Isolation Information Sheet





TN-TAN Survey

Please complete the evaluation survey using the following link or scanning the QR code:

https://redcap.link/TRIAD_FPTR_Impact

Required Information:

Event Title:

FPTR



Learning Objectives:

•Objective 1: Relate how communication differences may impact a student's behavior

Objective 2: Explain why a student may exhibit challenging emotional or physical behaviors as a way to communicate

Objective 3: Distinguish among supports and strategies that can impact a student's communication and behavior in the classroom based on how we understand their behavior

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