The Challenge of Developing Consistency of Access

"Facing the Challenges of Seating and Access" Series, Part One
By Karen M. Kangas OTR/L
For PaTTAN

A Definition of Access

How an individual is able to manage an activity of interest with intention, independently

How to manage a particular machine at a particular time for a specific activity which will produce an output (vocal or printed)

Old paradigms we need to leave behind

- Access to activity and AT and must be assessed FIRST

- Find the OPTIMAL site

(These paradigms developed from working with teens and adults who had degenerative disease or an acquired injury, they were already readers, writers, and independent in activity)

New paradigms we need to embrace

– Access is the last, not the first
– Child must know activity
  • The machine, how it works
  • The software the machine controls, the real activity
  • How a method of access works, by seeing it work first
  • Beginning, middle, and end of activity
  • Repeating the activity in frequency, rather than in length of time

New paradigms we need to embrace

- In children, switch sites develop and increase

- Scanning can lead to direct selection
  - (2 switch step, 3 switch mouse, head mouse)

- Direct selection and scanning can be used simultaneously, and task specifically

Old paradigms we need to leave behind

- Seating for function is to be restrictive, controlling the body

- The seating the child comes to school in, is the "right" seating for activity

- If only the student could hold up her head then we could work

- The student wants to use her hands

New paradigms we need to embrace

-Seating must allow for task participation and performance

-Seating must provide pelvic weight bearing for visual convergence

-Seating must be situationally specific, task specific and change

-For hands to work, heads must work, for heads to work, the pelvis must be weight bearing

Old paradigms we need to leave behind

-Consistent switch site/s exist and are to be "found" in assessment before AAC/AT device use can occur

-Single switch scanning is where to start, it's the simplest

-Use only one or two choices to begin, it's easier

-"Hand over hand" helps the child learn to use her hands

New paradigms we need to embrace

- Access sites (body sites) develop from interest, intention, and experience with activity, not in isolation
- Consistency is not what is needed, interest, intention, and attention are needed
- The activity must be known, with the beginning, middle and end obvious
- Repetition of the activity will bring anticipation of motor use and support its accuracy
- Motor learning requires: no verbal prompts, a mental rehearsal, and specific feedback at activity's end

New paradigms we need to embrace

- The switch is NOT the activity
- Electronic (zero pressure) switches vs. mechanical switches for AAC, computer, mobility (automaticity and transparency)
- Don't use automatic scanning first, 2 switch needed
- Set up activity for student to join, supporting postural control to the activity itself, and its anticipation
- Activities need to build, and be interesting, and complex
- Mistakes will be made, expected, and encouraged
- Alternative access must be used by others to support the "mental rehearsal" or "visualization"

New paradigms we need to embrace

- Work for short periods, frequent breaks, support knowledge of beginning, middle and end of activity
- Increase numbers of activity, to support a larger repertoire of experience and control
- Expect real "access" to be revealed rather than "taught"
- The activity must be known, and contain success and challenge, risk and reward

Shared Struggles with Real Students

Connor
Morgan
Gretchen