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AAC methodology in kindergarten: a tool for inclusion to communicate beside words

Practical experience: from entry communication to interaction with the World.

First year of kindergarten: the beginning of an intervention on a non-verbal kid

We have met Christian on his first year in kindergarten as a kid that hadn't good communication competences:

- Look at the object and on the person;

- Shared look;

- Point at the object;

- Vocalisation;

- Head movement to nod

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Remember that...

THE ONLY TRUE PRE-REQUIREMENT TO COMMUNICATE IS BREATH.

- Pat Mirenda -

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Exposition to entry communication

▶ Together with Christian both family and teacher at kindergarten read modified books, noting the high interest of the kid for symbols.

▶ Before that moment to identify places, activities, persons ans different moments of the day they used photos.

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PARTNERS

Communication partners have the need to learn how to interact in an effective way with people using AAC

Kids learn the power and meaning of communication observing the impact on their environment.

HOW

▶ Routines;

▶ Observe and give meaning;

▶ Catch minimum spaces for interaction;

▶ Start from highly motivating situations;

▶ Create interactions.

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Entry signals

▶ Tactile (touch water before bath, touch mouth before eating, touch hands with the towel before wetting hair…)

▶ Auditive (bit the spoon on a cup before soup, the glass full of water on the table, or words to describe what is going to happen)

▶ Cenesthesic (swing the kid before put him on the seesaw, lift up his arms before undressing him)

▶ Olfactory (let him smell shampoo before washing hair, food before eating…)

▶ Visual (coloured dish to eat, show objects before giving him, symbols…)

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ROUTINES

▶ First steps of communication come inside situations and relationships that the baby experiments daily.

▶ In the beginning communication signs have meaning only inside daily routines; only after they become shared and exportable to other contexts.

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Modeling

- This is a user methodology for entry communication system that the communication partner uses and that backs up constantly to words the use of symbols or the indication of objects and symbols.
- It has different objectives:
  - Show constantly which can be the use of the system, without forcing its use;
  - Allor the kid to better comprehend what is happening;
  - Support comprehension;
  - Expand and enrich existing communication competences (lexical, phrase structure, narration)

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Use of AAC in entry communication and settlement of the environment

▶ Our goals has been to immediatly reinforce entry communication, starting from a modified book personalised for Christian to catch his interest.

▶ Settle a facilitating environment (starting from highly motivating situations and giving meaning to each possible space of communication interaction).

▶ Passage to a communication system based on symbols.

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Environment labelling

- We have labelled all the classroom and adjacent spaces with symbols, allowing the kid the recognition of space and through constant modeling of communication partner showing the entry symbol.

- Constant modeling is fundamental to start a communication exchange not service oriented.

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First contact with exit communication

▶ Communication through symbols is a brand-new language and therefore it has to be learnt.

▶ We used for a long time modeling before making performance exams.

▶ Furthermore, the difficulty of Christian was exactly communication will that should be built day by day.

▶ He had to understand that he could have made choices and feel active part of the communication.

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Opportunities not obligations

ONE LEARN TO CHOOSE BY CHOOSING

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I communicate my needs

I communicate my desires.

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Why symbols

▶ Clear

▶ General for every life context

▶ More understandable, even for the person that doesn't know his/her partner

▶ Lower emotional impact rather than a photo

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From single symbol to thematic table

▶ We created a notebook with symbols related to Christian primary needs using velcro in order to remove the symbol and use it individually or in thematic couples.

▶ The «bag» notebook has been created to be always available (still in use for day trip and excursions because is usable and comfortable).

▶ Soon we noticed which were the problems and limitis that could have this tool for Christian.

Thematic tables

The passage to thematic table has been gradual but quick.

Christian had difficulty in using autonomously AAC, but he was perfectly able to communicate his needs if requested by an adult.

▶ With what you want to play?

▶ In which place of the school?

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Communicate not only needs

▶ Tables for social and symbolic games;

▶ The risk is always to concentrate too much on needs not taking into consideration other communication objectives and socialisation.

▶ Example: table for symbolic game with a doll

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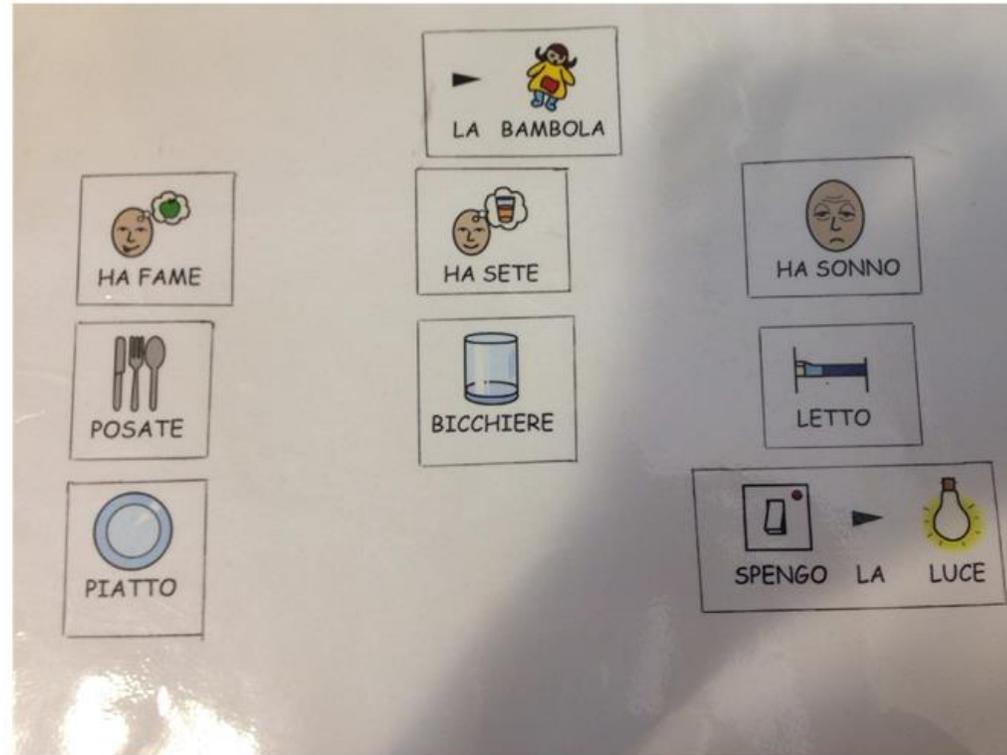
We are building basis for communication

▶ Christian has realised that he can communicate and that others can communicate with him;

▶ That he can make choices concerning: needs, desires but also feelings.

▶ It is a tool for communication in continous evolution depending on the needs and peculiarity of Christian.

▶ Never stop and never minimize communication subjects.

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Notebook with cascade table

Where are we now?

- Communication notebook became more sophisticate foreseeing cascade tables and not only thematical.
- Every day we catch new spark to enrich communication.

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Symbol interiorization and use of combined gesture

Many symbols have been translated by Christian in gestures (e.g. Stop or More).

We enrich and not neglect this communication function, we codify it in a way that the gesture can be understandable from communication partner.

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Where are we at the moment?

- Writing with the keyboard supported by symbol, in the perspective of primary school. First attempts.

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BE ZEN!

Be able to WAIT!!!

Cheat if necessary!

Offer opportunities

Sometimes play dumb!!