**Communication With Children Who Are Deafblind**

**Lesson 4 Part 3 Described Transcript**

**Narrator:** Teaching Children Who Are Deafblind: Professional Development for Educators

Communicating With Children Who Are Deafblind

Lesson 4: Complex Language

Part 3: Expanding Communication and Concept Development

**[Visual Description]** A child looks closely at a paper that has instructions and measurements for how to build something.

**Teacher:** What does that mean?

**Child:** One, one half.

**Teacher:** Is that what that says?

**Child:** Four halves.

**[Visual Description]** A young boy and his teacher look at a colorful round diagram with photos and labels for different types of sports. The child touches one of the photos.

**Narrator:** Even though a child may be communicating fluently in a formal language and appearing to be smart and keeping up in classes—chances are they’re lacking in many foundational concepts.

**[Visual Description]** A young boy lies back on a big pillow on the floor while a teacher kneels next to him. She smiles and makes eye contact as she makes a sign with one hand.

For most people, our overall concept of the world is visually-based—and much of our language is, too.

**[Visual Description]** A young boy sits on the floor between his practitioner's legs and turns to smile at her. She leans to the side and gestures to him.

A child who is deafblind, particularly if they are congenitally deafblind, will have a far different concept of the world than those with typical vision and hearing.

**[On-Screen Text]** Chris Montgomery, CTVI, M.Ed.

Deafblind Consultant

**Chris Montgomery:** The story is, she's doing this worksheet, and she's kind of on her computer. And she's filling in the blanks. And I'm like, you know, “Gabby, can I see your worksheet?” And it said, “Okay, like, when was the fall of Rome?” And I'm, I'm a bad history student. I can't remember when that was, but she had whatever time it was filled in there, and I asked her, I said, “So, what does, what does that mean? The fall of Rome?” And she thought for a little while, and she thought, she said. “Well, it fell over.” And so, you know, just asking a question, comprehension check, you can call that like. Gabby really didn't know conceptually what that meant. She could fill in the blank. But what did that mean? Not a clue.

**[Visual Description]** The young boy who was reading instructions for how to build something, uses a ruler to mark a long, flat piece of wood with a pencil.

**Narrator:** Because of limits to incidental learning, direct experience is essential for developing concepts and language for this population of students. The more instruction can be “hands-on,” the more meaningful it will be to students who are deafblind.

Here’s how this might work in a math class for a unit on measurements.

**[On-Screen Text]** Chris Montgomery, CTVI, M.Ed.

Deafblind Consultant

**Chris Montgomery:** And so we were trying to, his teacher and team and I, were trying to brainstorm some stuff for a measurement lesson that he had to do.

And we came up with the idea of he was going to measure, he had a bunch of brothers and sisters, he was, gonna, you know how you, like, stand in the doorway and, like, you know, measure your height? So he was gonna do that for everybody in his family. Then it was square footage. So how to measure the room, you know, and then do the multiplication to come up with square footage. So it was more of this, the same things, but trying to apply it to something that he could really experience and do.

**[Visual Description]** On a sidewalk, a teenage boy and girl have a conversation using sign language. She signs into his hand. They both have white canes and walk as they have a conversation.

**Narrator:** Consider, too, that to promote language acquisition of any kind, you must be fully immersed in that language. The same holds true for children who use complex language. For example, if they’re ASL users, they’ll need to be immersed among people who are communicating in ASL.

**[On-Screen Text]** Maurice Belote

Deafblind Consultant and Educator

**Maurice Belote:** But something else that doesn't get a lot of attention is being mindful of idiomatic usage of language or figures of speech. Whatever you want to call it. I can speak from experience about English. The English language is very, very idiomatic in a way that a lot of us don't think about.

So a teacher might say, “Come on, you are as slow as molasses today. Let's get a move-on so that we can be on time for class.” Okay? So that, just in that short statement, which would make sense to anybody who's a native English speaker, “Slow as molasses,” is idiomatic. “Get a move on” is idiomatic, and even the expression being “on time” is idiomatic.

**[Visual Description]** A teenage girl rests her left hand on an adult’s right hand as the adult is signing.

**Narrator:** Equally important will be learning the slang. And every language, including ASL, includes it.

**[Visual Description]** A young girl sits on the beach in wet sand with her legs stretched out in front of her.

**Narrator:** Another important strategy to broaden a child’s language and understanding is to use analogies. Once a child understands one word or phrase—like what “a river” is—they can learn what “a creek” is if you say, “a creek is like a river only very small.”

**[Visual Description]** A young girl talks to her father sitting next to her on a bleacher and touches his shoulder.

Students who use complex language typically enjoy learning by analogy—connecting the familiar to the new makes learning meaningful and fun.

**[Visual Description]** A group of teenagers and an adult interact around a table in a crowded room. One teen puts two marshmallows on a stick.

Let’s next turn our attention to the learning environment and classmates. It’s critical that children have access to more than just content in their classes; they also need access to what’s happening in the classroom and to their peers.

**[On-Screen Text]** Sandra Gillam

Liam’s Mom

Teacher of Students With Visual Impairments

**Sandra Gillam:** So Liam's interpreter not only interprets what's happening or what the teacher's saying, cause that's very important, but she also needs to interpret what's happening in his environment, the classroom environment. That's really important to Liam. And I think for Liam, Liam likes to know what's happening. So if you know, kids are laughing at whatever the teacher said, or if there's also, somebody came into the classroom. That's really important for him to know those things. If something's being written on the board.

**[Visual Description]** A teenage girl speaks into a small microphone.

**Narrator:** If a child has any usable hearing, consider also providing them access to what their classmates are saying.

**[Visual Description]** A teenage boy sits at a table with other teens who are working with braillers, stickers, and paper. The boy speaks into two microphones that an adult holds up to his mouth.

For example, if a child uses a microphone FM system to receive auditory information from the teacher, add a second microphone that can be passed around to students in the class when they ask questions or make comments.

**[Visual Description]** Two boys sit next to each other on beanbag chairs and give each other a high five.

**[Visual Description]** Two teenage girls work to assemble something with small sticks and marshmallows at a table.

Equally important will be helping a child who’s deafblind develop their interpersonal and small group communication skills; that is, their experience interacting with more and different types of people as well as more than one person at a time.

**[Visual Description]** A series of images and videos - A young adult male sits at a desk in an office setting and talks and gestures to an adult who sits next to him. A young boy scans a barcode on a library book. Two adult women smile and hold up two beautifully decorated cakes. An adult woman signs into the hands of a teenage boy in a warehouse setting, with a ladder and metal shelves behind them that are filled with boxes.

Lastly, supporting any child who is deafblind should include preparing them with strategies that will serve them well in life after high school.

**[On-Screen Text]** Tracy Evans Luiselli, Ed.D.

Director, New England Consortium on Deafblindness

**Tracy Evans Luiselli:** I guess my biggest worry is what happens to these students when they graduate, because they often go into environments. If it's not at home. they often go into environments where they don't have that communication support, especially if it's work environments. And part of the reason, I think, is just lack of staffing and lack of resources. So thinking about sort of those break down strategies where communication does break down to no fault to the student, coming up with strategies that we teach children young, sort of high school-aged folks. What do you do when communication breaks down? Can you use a whiteboard? Can you use a notebook? Is there something that you could use as far as your iPhone or some sort of technology. So I think, really giving students the skills to use particular strategies when they do have those communication breakdowns is really really important.

**Narrator:** Let’s take a break and check what you know...

Imagine that you have a student who communicates fluently in spoken English. What might you do to add more modern usage to their language?

Pause the video if you need time to think.

Idioms and slang are important parts of any language, so help the student incorporate them into their vocabulary. Children who are deafblind typically enjoy learning about them and expanding their vocabulary. And, as an added benefit, an understanding of idioms and slang may help them communicate more effectively with their peers.

Now, let’s review our pre-lesson questions:

True or False?

Children who use complex language take statewide alternate assessments.

FALSE. Children who use complex language typically take regular state assessment tests—with or without accommodations

Children who use complex language often struggle to keep up with the pace of instruction in a typical classroom. TRUE.

A child who uses complex language will have to work much harder than their peers with typical vision and hearing to keep up with the typical pace of instruction.

Most children who use complex language will benefit from scheduling their more intensive, challenging classes in the morning due to fatigue that is possible later in the day. TRUE.

Because they have to work harder to access information in class, it can be very fatiguing over time. That’s why children who use complex language may want to take their more difficult classes earlier in the day.

This is the end of the module.

**[On-Screen Text]** National Center on Deafblindness

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