

Summary

What is an alternative communication strategy anyway?

- A different or varied mode of communication used instead of or along with spoken language to help children understand messages, as well as express their thoughts and ideas with others. These strategies could include, but are not limited to sign language, gestures, visuals, speaking in child's home language, using simplified language, or an augmented communication device.

What's the Point?

- When inclusion and equity are embraced in educators' practices, all children are supported to participate in conversations, play, and daily routines and activities.
- Children with diverse needs, language delays, or who are dual language learners need educators to embrace the use of multi-modal literacies to communicate with peers and adults.
- All children have the right to be able to communicate their needs, share their thoughts, and be valued citizens in their community.
- Increases social opportunities for bi-directional (two-way) conversations with peers.

How Do I Do This?

- Work with children's families to learn about their child's communication abilities, needs, and home language. If child is receiving speech or language therapy, educators ask for information about Speech and Language pathologist's (SLP) recommendations.
- Share information about children's communication abilities and needs with all team members.
- Research and learn how to use the alternative communication strategies recommended by the family, team members and other involved professionals.
- Use strategies throughout the daily routine to support children's communication of needs, thoughts, ideas, stories and comments with both adults and their peers.

How Will the Children Participate in This Practice?

- Children can independently use posted visuals in the classroom to communicate with adults and peers.
- Children can learn how to use assistive language methods such as sign language.
- Children choose which communication methods work best for them.

Checklist

Task	Complete?
Educators actively observe children in the program to determine the communication strengths and needs of individual children.	
Educators create or gather required materials (classroom visuals and sign language resources).	
Educators adjust their communication to support all children's individual needs, such as slowing down speech, using short simple sentences, and pairing words with gestures or sign	
Educators use alternative communication strategies to support children in sharing their ideas, stories, and comments during play conversations with their peers.	
Educators use group activities to teach all children in the program alternative communication strategies with their peers, (e.g., teaching sign language by pairing sign with words in songs)	
Educators share visuals and sign language resources with all families and document individual children's progress to keep their families informed	
Educators engage families as needed, to learn about their child's communication abilities and needs, including information from community professionals (SLP). Share important information with team members.	
Team members and family review daily schedule to discuss and develop strategies to support child's communication and participation in all program activities, transitions and routines.	
For dual language learners, educators engage family to learn frequently used words in the child's home language (food, bathroom, etc.)	
Educators work with families to learn to use individual communication system, such as a picture exchange system or a communication device such as touch chat on an iPad, as needed.	
Educators support children's independent use of alternative communication strategies by ensuring required visuals/systems are always available to the child.	

Learning requires inclusive and equitable environments where children work and play within diverse groups, and engage in meaningful, respectful interactions with people, materials, and content that embody diversity.

Makovichuk, Hewes, Lirette & Thomas, 2014, p. 111

Flight: Alberta's early learning and care framework.

Retrieved from www.flightframework.ca

