

# Descriptive Teaching, Talking, and Talking

Gail M. Van Tatenhove, PA, MS, CCC-SP

Conversations with Gail, April 2015

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## 2016 Nancy McKinley Lecture Series: Topics in Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC)

Guest Editor: Linda R. Schreiber, M.S., CCC-  
SLP, BCS-CL, ASHA Fellow

In partnership with University of Wisconsin  
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## AAC in the General Education Classroom: Using Descriptive Talking to Teach Students Using Robust AAC Systems

**Presenter:** Gail M. Van Tatenhove, CCC-SLP

**Moderated by:**  
Amy Natho, M.S., CCC-SLP, CEU Administrator, SpeechPathology.com

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## AAC in the General Education Classroom: Using Descriptive Talking to Teach Students Using Robust AAC Systems



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- I have the **following relevant relationships** in the products or services described, reviewed, evaluated or compared in this presentation.
  - Financial
    - Speaking fee from [SpeechPathology.com](http://SpeechPathology.com)
    - Author/Seller of the Natural Aided Language Board and the Core Vocabulary Classroom Kit.
  - Non-Financial
    - Prentke Romich Application and Support Software (PASS)

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## Learner Outcomes

- As a result of this Continuing Education Activity, participants will be able to:
  - 1) describe the vocabulary needed in an AAC system to support descriptive talking.
  - 2) describe the benefits of descriptive talking
  - 3) explain how to plan a lesson using the principles of descriptive talking

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## Descriptive Talking

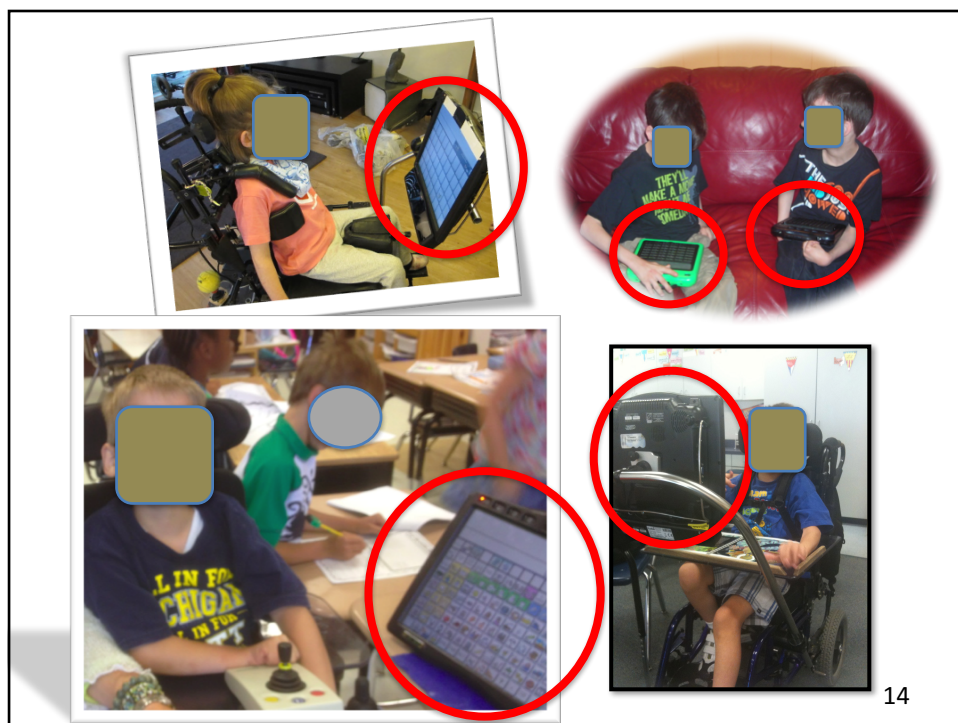
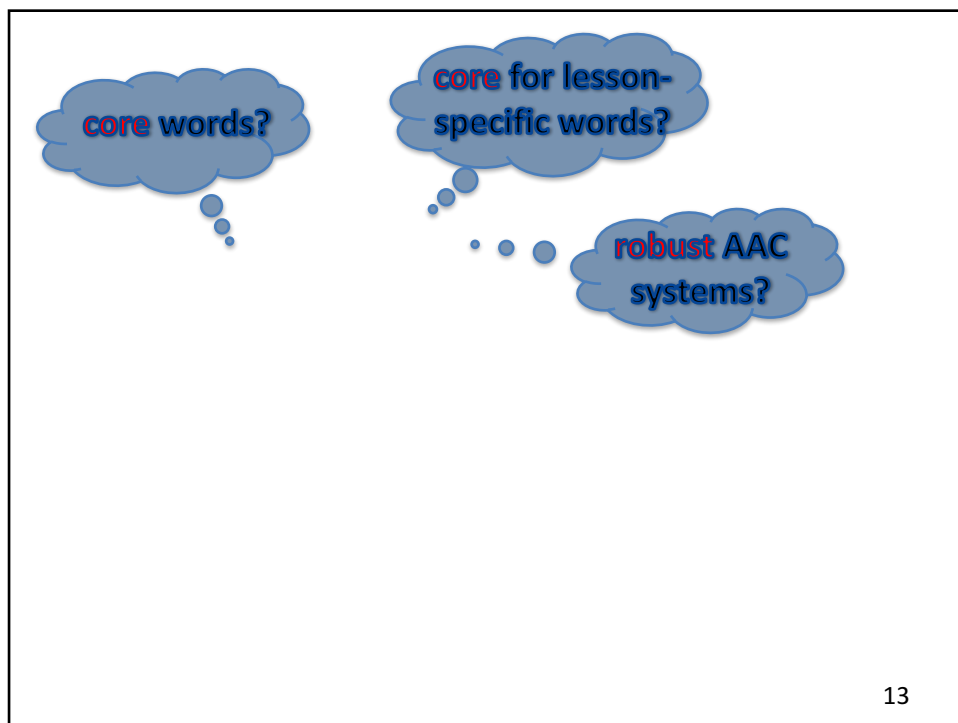
A technique that focuses  
on using **core words** for  
lesson-specific words

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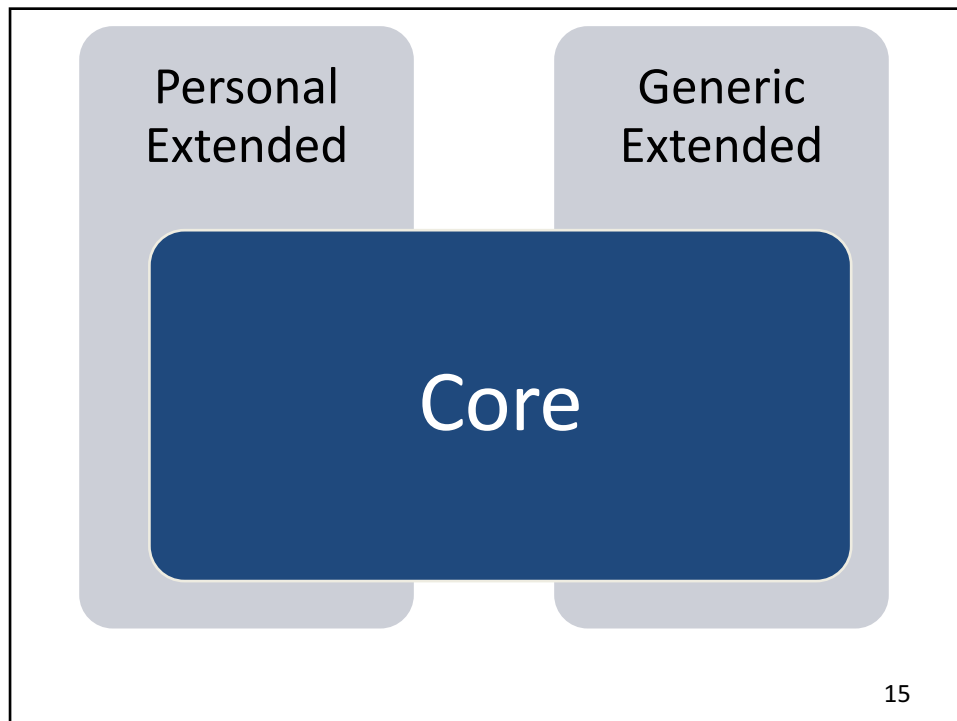
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## What is and is not core vocabulary?

- Ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country. (John F. Kennedy)

**common**  
**frequently used**  
**versatile**

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## Re-Usable Words are Core!

ask not what your  
country can do for you

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## More Math Facts

A person ....	Number of words known
<u>starting school at 6*</u>	5000 to 6000 words
without a formal education	35,000 words
with a high school education	50,000 words
with a college education	50,000 to 75,000 words

\* David Crystal, linguist

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**20,000 words  
in your  
active, speaking  
vocabulary**

Susan Dent: <http://www.lingholic.com>

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**Dr. Suess**

**255 words**

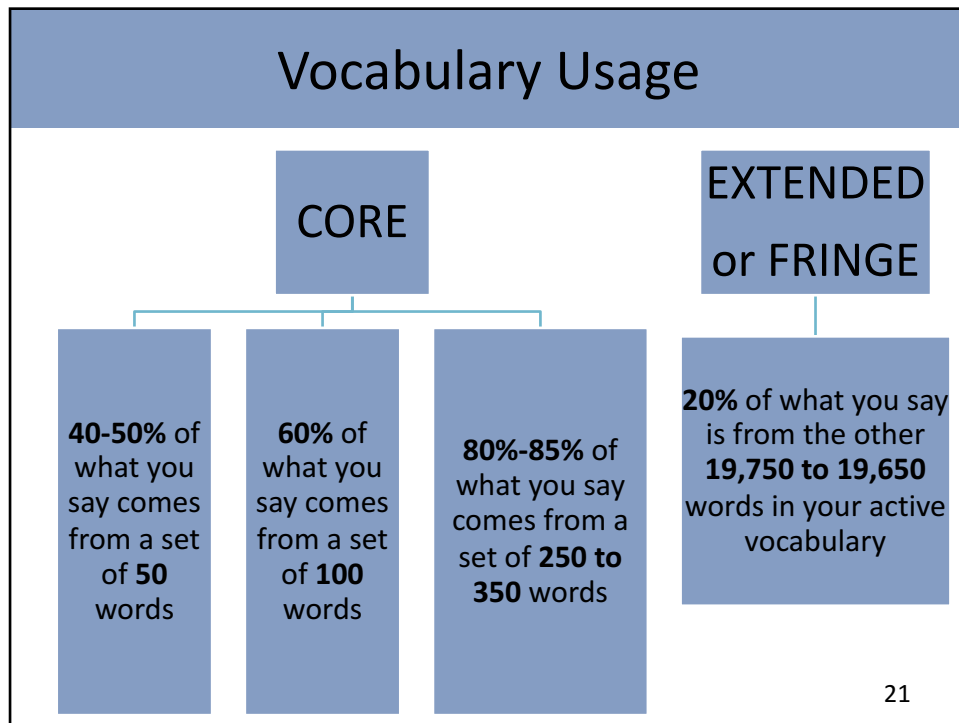
**50 words**

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I'm working on learning the core vocabulary in my device but I'm a long way from knowing all the words.

My teacher is asking questions about the lesson and the words to answer her questions aren't in my device and, I'm not a good enough speller to spell them.

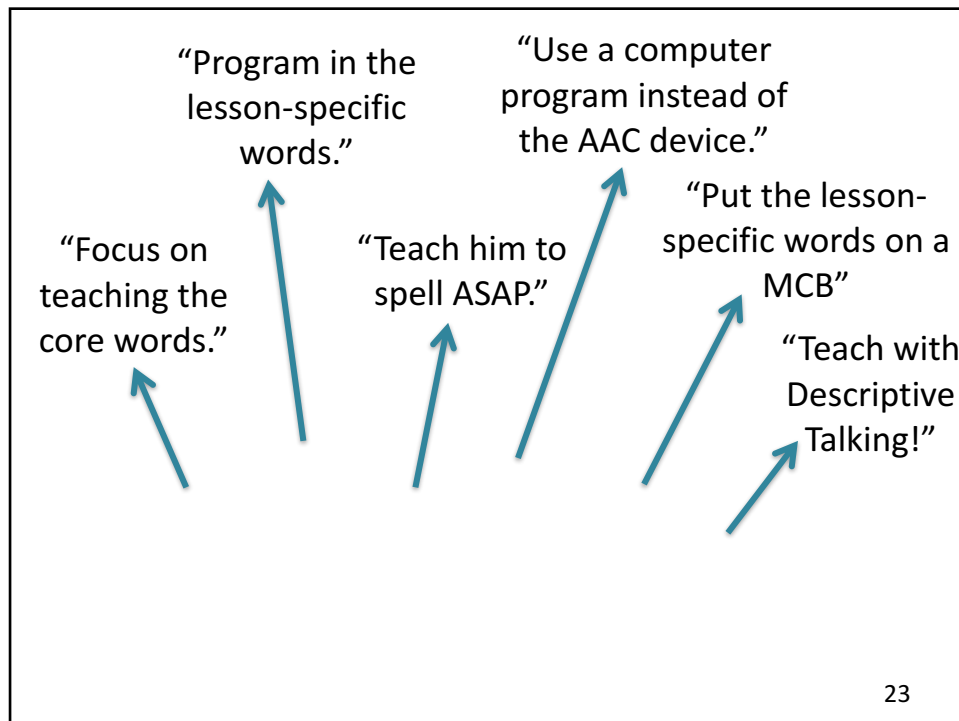
How are my teachers going to teach me?

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## Why Teach with Descriptive Talking?

Practical

Strategically Necessary

Educationally Sound

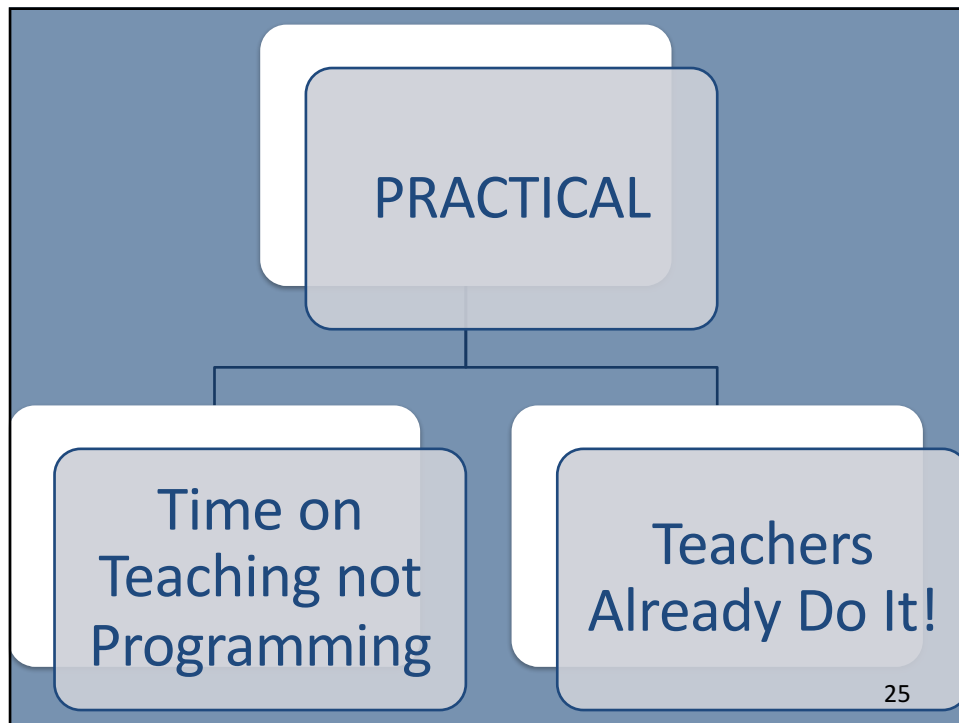
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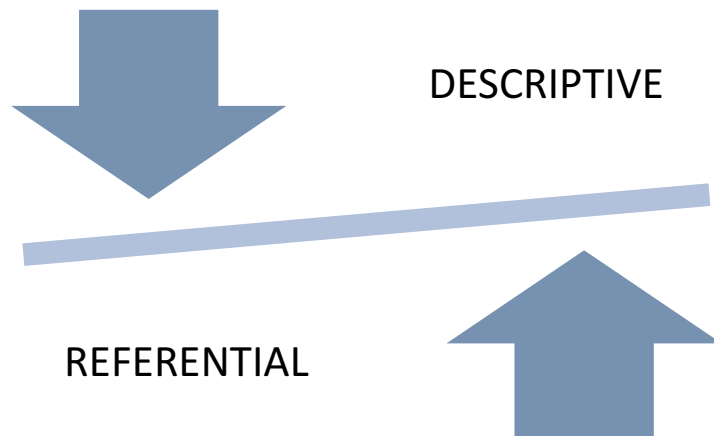
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When Teaching-Testing with their students ALL teachers go back and forth between the use of Referential\* and Descriptive\* techniques.



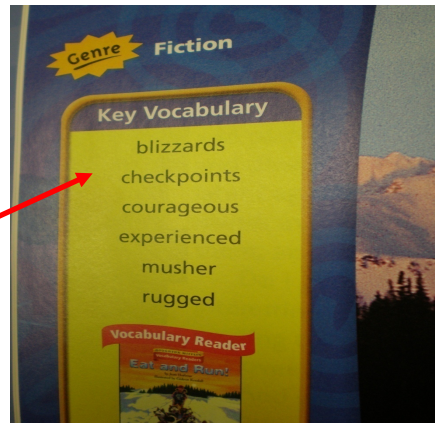
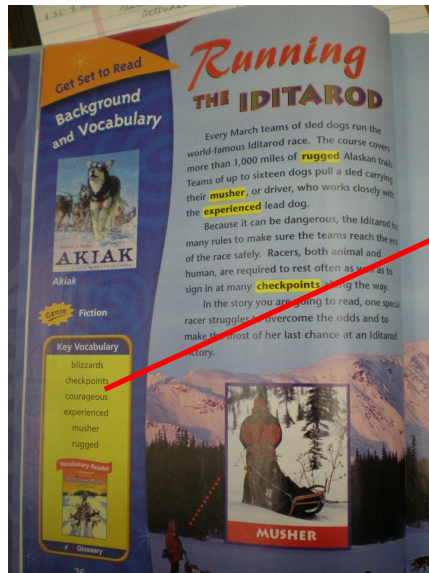
\* Coined by Bruce Baker, 2005; Personal conversations and various presentations. 26

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## Curriculum Materials



• Example used with permission.

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Referential  
Style with  
Speaking  
Students

Probe for the  
recall of facts

Where is the race  
held?

What do we call the  
race?

Who drives the sled?

Quick, one-  
word answers,  
usually only  
one correct  
answer

Alaska

Iditarod

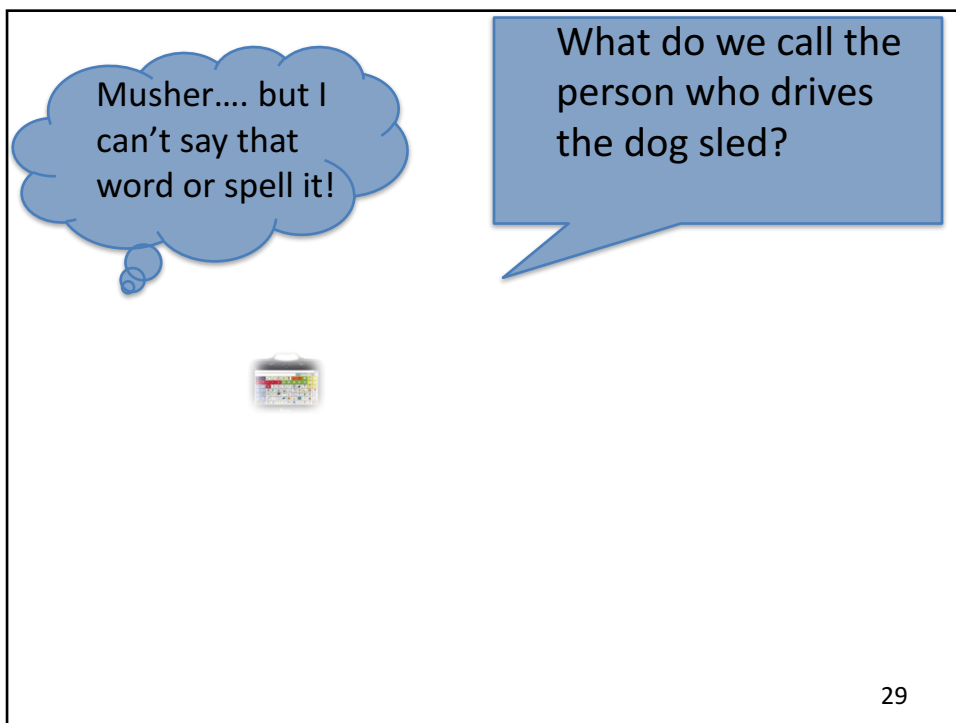
musher

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A comic strip panel with a white background and a black border. In the upper left, a blue thought bubble contains the text "Musher.... but I can't say that word or spell it!". In the upper right, a blue speech bubble contains the text "What do we call the person who drives the dog sled?". In the center, there is a small, colorful keyboard icon.

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A logo for the word "Efficient". The letter "E" is white and set within a green square. The word "fficient" is written in a black, cursive-style font to the right of the square.

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Descriptive Style with <b>Speaking Students</b>	Probe for understanding, application, opinion	What does it mean to be experienced?  Why does a musher need an experienced lead dog?
	Answers are multi-word sentences, usually no one exact answer	did it before, knows how to do it, did already, good at it  help stay safe, show the other dogs, all dogs work together

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drive  
take care dog  
he go

What does a  
musher do?

What does it  
mean to be  
experienced?

did it before,  
knows how to  
do it

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## Benefits of Descriptive Talking

Stable vocabulary

Practice putting words together

Core vocabulary in different contexts

Literacy learning

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## Why Teach with Descriptive Talking?

✓ Practical

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Strategically Necessary

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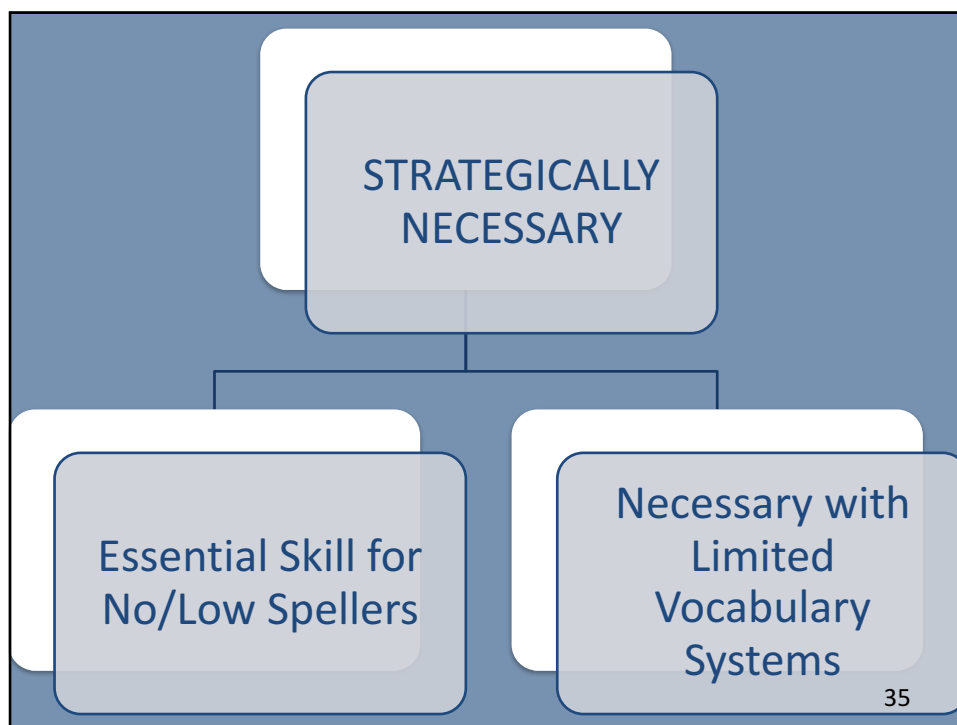
Educationally Sound

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team team team  
weekend fun



over water, up fast,  
loud, cold

drink, green, Taco Bell,  
fall, down

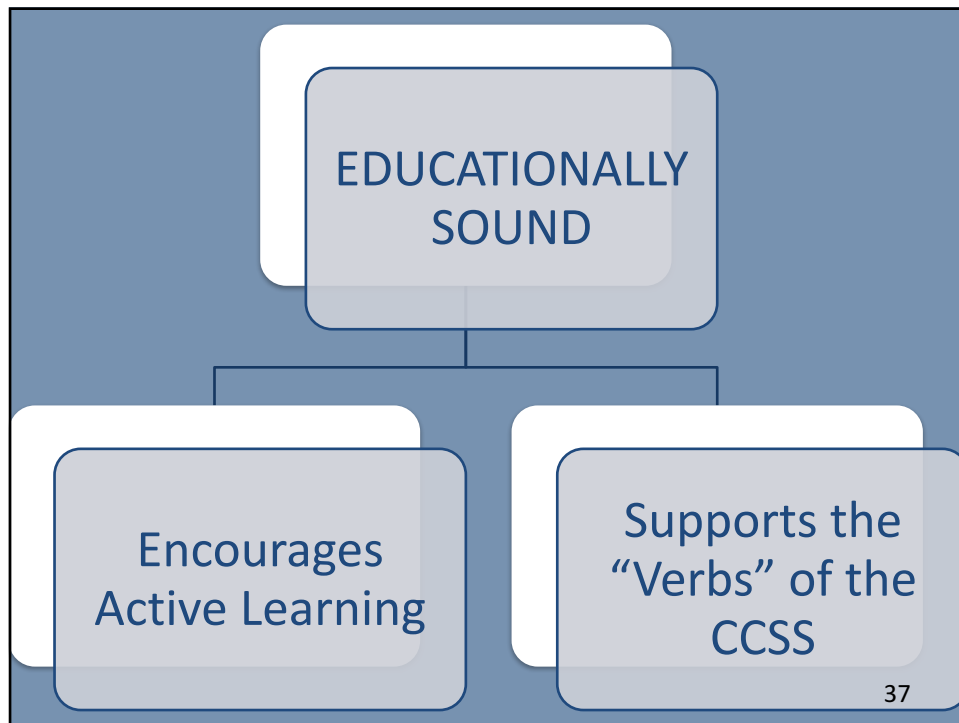


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## Active Learning



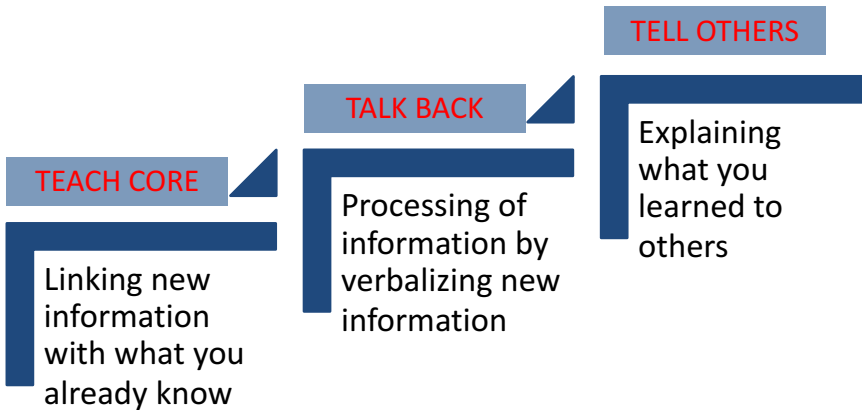
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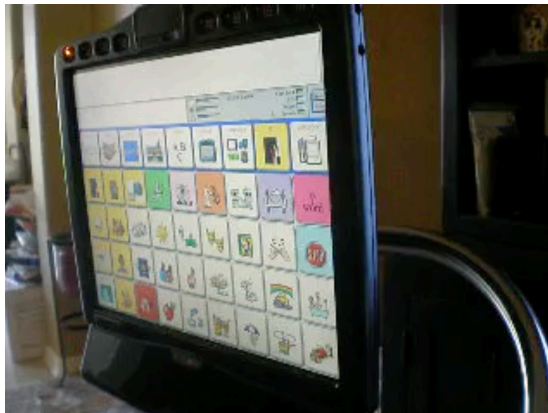
## The Vocabulary Bits of Active Learning Involves....



Sandholtz, J., Ringstaff, C., & Dwyer, D. (1997). Teaching with technology: creating student-centered classrooms. New York: Teachers College Press. 39

## Teach with Core – Talk Back with Core

- **TEACH:** Information Input – Taught with core vocabulary words, modeled on the device.
- **TALK BACK:** Review and rehearse to support recall.
- **TELL:** Recall and explain to someone else.



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## Supports the “Verbs” of the CCSS



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### 3rd Grade Social Studies – Civics & Government

Florida Next Generation Sunshine State Standards

***Explain*** the purpose and need of government.

keep people safe, give people rights, take care of things I can't do myself

***Describe*** how government gains its power from the people.

we pick them, say no when they do bad things

Identify the levels of government.

state, local, federal

***Define*** civility, volunteerism, respect.

civility = be nice to others

volunteerism = do work for no money, do together what town needs

respect = everyone listen, no fighting when not thinking the same

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How do you help teachers learn what words are and aren't in the device?

How do you organize and conduct lessons using descriptive talking?

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How do you help teachers learn what words are and aren't in the device?

Use terminology teachers know

- Core Vocabulary words = Dolch and/or Fry Sight Word Lists
- Extended Vocabulary words = Key Lesson Vocabulary

Use examples of vocabulary from their own classrooms

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# Descriptive Teaching, Talking, and Talking

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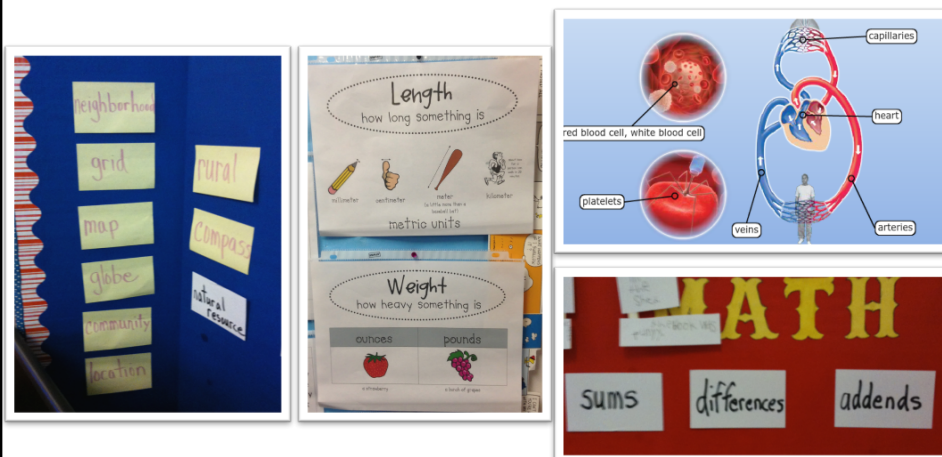
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## Core Vocabulary = High Frequency Words for Reading & Writing



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## Extended Vocabulary = Subject and Lesson Specific Words



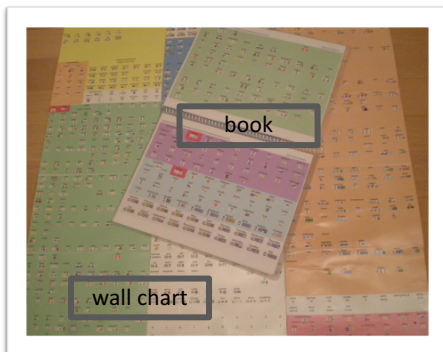
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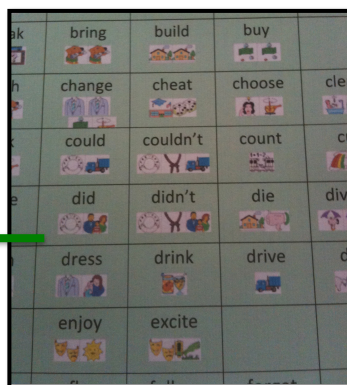
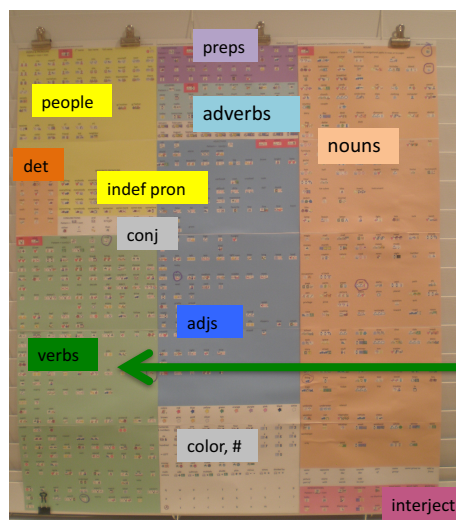
## The Strategy Preferred by Gen Ed Teachers



- Provide an at-a-glance “visual dictionary”
  - that shows the most important words in the device (core and some extended) that the student needs to learn how to say
  - but not ALL the words that are in the device or which the student needs to learn how to say

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## Visual Dictionary with 350+/- words



This visual dictionary is a commercial product (Natural Aided Language Board-NALB) sold by Gail Van Tatenhove and is pre-made for students using Unity or LAMP Words for Life; or with printed words only to customize for any program or AAC device/app. The NALB comes on a CD for you to print and put together. Go to [www.vantatenhove.com](http://www.vantatenhove.com) for more information.

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## What words ARE in the device?

- Teach how to look-up words **NOT on the visual dictionary**
  - check in the paper or e-manual (if provided)
  - use emulation software on an external computer (if available)
  - use the “dictionary” in the device (if available)
- **Explain** the purpose and need of government.
  - The **government** keeps people **safe**.
  - The **government** takes care of things I can’t do myself.
  - They **vote** on stuff.
  - They **pass laws**.

government   
safe  \*vote  
pass  \*law

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✓ How do you help teachers learn what words are and aren’t in the device?

How do you organize and conduct lessons using descriptive talking?

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## Discuss use of Visual Dictionary

Teacher or  
Instructional  
Assistant:

Circle words to use during the lesson as  
single words or in phrases or short  
sentences

Point at words as say words, phrases  
and short sentences

Student:

Visual reference when giving answers

Visual reminder for new ideas

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## Example Lesson

### Steps

- Identify and introduce the key concepts of the lesson
- Teach, Model and and “Talk Back” about the concepts
- Review and test learning

### Identify

1-Identify and  
Introduce Lesson  
Vocabulary  
"emergency"

Available at Gail's YouTube Channel: [gvantatenhove](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCvntatenhove)

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## Example Lesson

Teach/Model/Talk Back

Review/Test

### 2-Teacher Teach and Student Talk

Define lesson key words  
with core vocabulary

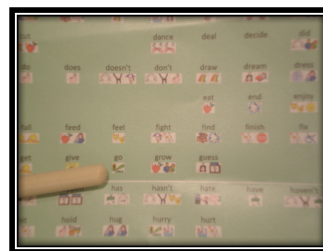
### 3-Review and Test

Available at Gail's YouTube channel: [gvantatenhove](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCvntatnhove)

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## Get Organized!

- Collect supplies for use with the visual dictionary / wall chart
  - dry-erase pen & eraser
  - foam paint brush
  - light pointer
  - clicker pointer



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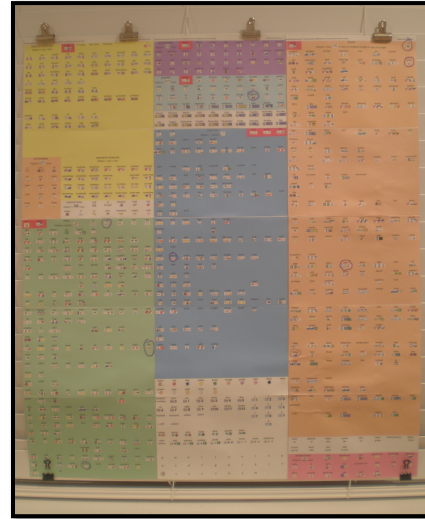


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## Display the Wall Charts



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## Adapt Activities, Lessons, and Materials

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What, if anything, would you do to adapt this activity, lesson, or material to encourage the use of core vocabulary?

---

What is the role of the instructional assistant (or teacher)?

---

What kind of additional visual supports (beyond visual dictionary) are needed?

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## Show Simple, Sample DT Materials

Say the name of each picture. Write the letter I if the word begins with the sound of I.

1.  \_\_\_\_\_
2.  \_\_\_\_\_
3.  \_\_\_\_\_
4.  \_\_\_\_\_
5.  \_\_\_\_\_
6.  \_\_\_\_\_
7.  \_\_\_\_\_
8.  \_\_\_\_\_
9.  \_\_\_\_\_
10.  \_\_\_\_\_


1. What do to adapt?
2. What is role of IA?
3. What visual supports?

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Work on the BIG WORD GROUPS – have lots of words from which to choose to do the activity.

1. Picked VERBS because pivot of any sentence.
2. The student was prompted to “find a green word” from his wall chart.

Look at the farm animal names below. Think of a word that begins with the same letter(s). Write the word on the line under the animal name.



1. sheep	sh_ <u>shut</u> _____
2. mule	m_ <u>make</u> _____
3. chicken	ch_ <u>cheat</u> _____
4. rooster	r_ <u>run</u> _____
5. turtle	t_ <u>turn</u> _____
6. goat	g_ <u>give</u> _____
7. rabbit	r_ <u>ride</u> _____
8. peacock	p_ <u>put</u> _____
9. pig	p_ <u>play</u> _____
10. horse	h_ <u>hold</u> _____

1. What do to adapt?
2. What is role of IA?
3. What visual supports?

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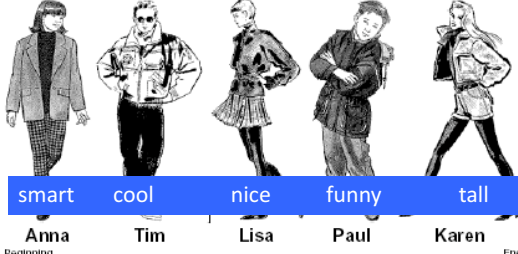
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Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Sequence**



smart	cool	nice	funny	tall
Anna	Tim	Lisa	Paul	Karen

Beginning End

Directions: Use the chart above to help you answer the following questions.

1. Start at the beginning of the chart. Who is 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, and 5<sup>th</sup>?  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. Who is fifth in line? \_\_\_\_\_
3. Who is second in line? \_\_\_\_\_
4. Who is third in line? \_\_\_\_\_
5. Who is fourth in line? \_\_\_\_\_

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## Plan a Lesson to Fully Implement Descriptive Talking

Identify KEY vocabulary of the lesson

Check for KEY vocabulary already in the device

Define KEY vocabulary and lesson concepts with CORE (from visual dictionary)

Address expectations & support questions

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## Science Class Example: Current Lesson Plan on Plants

1. Plant seeds and watch the plants grow over the next 3 months
2. Describe the different parts of the plant
3. Discuss the functions of the plant parts in the growing process
4. Complete a worksheet on the parts of a plant
5. Write a response to an application question

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## **Step 1:** Identify Key Vocabulary

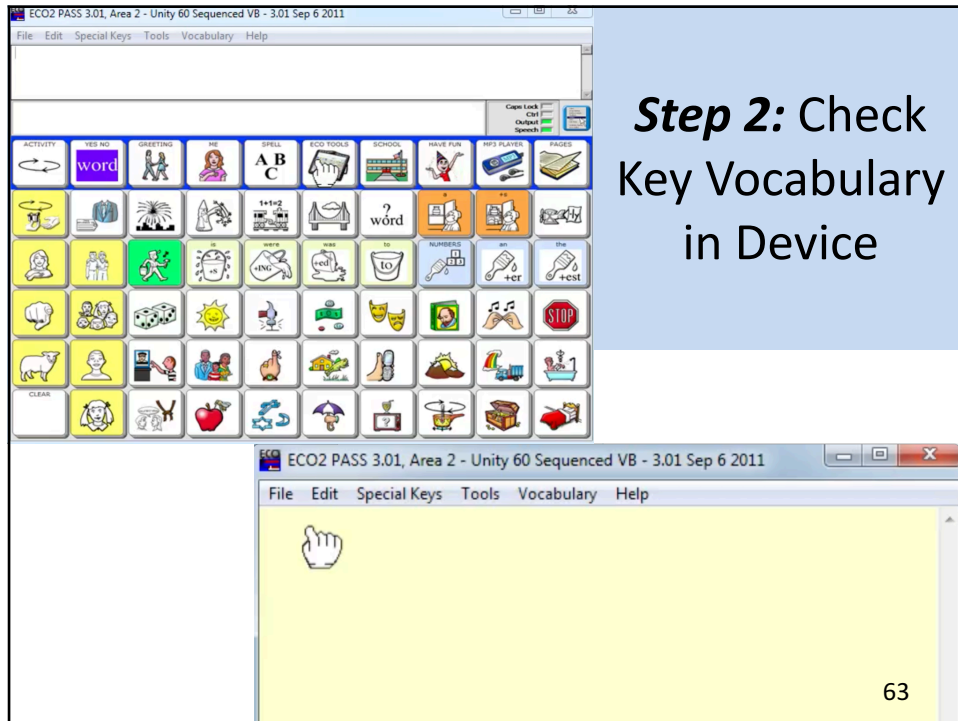
- |                 |                    |
|-----------------|--------------------|
| 1. plant (noun) | 9. water           |
| 2. plant (verb) | 10. light          |
| 3. flower       | 11. sun            |
| 4. leaf/leaves  | 12. air            |
| 5. stem         | 13. photosynthesis |
| 6. root         | 14. support        |
| 7. ground       | 15. absorb         |
| 8. seed         | 16. nutrient       |

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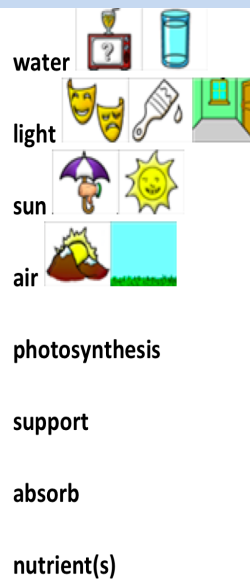
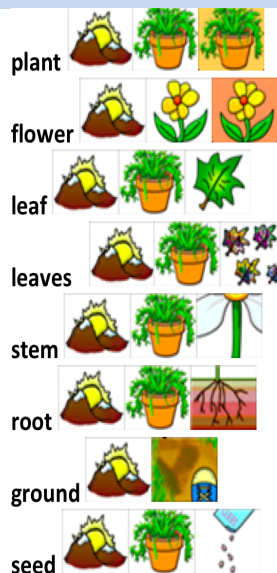
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**Step 2: Check Key Vocabulary in Device**

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## Step 2: Check Key Vocabulary in Device



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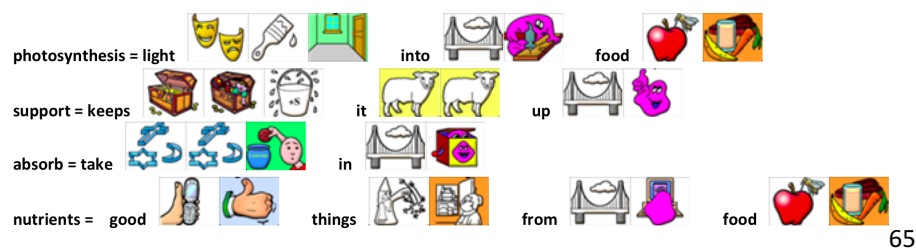
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## Step 3: Define Key & Concepts with Core

1. photosynthesis – light into food
2. support – keeps it up
3. absorb – take in
4. nutrients – good things from food



## Step 3: Define Key & Concepts with Core

- Words to describe and discuss plant parts



If you are looking up the words using computer software, SAVE your work and turn it into a VSM to use during the lesson.

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# Descriptive Teaching, Talking, and Talking

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## Science Class Example: Current Lesson Plan on Plants

1. Plant seeds and watch the plants grow over the next 3 months
- 2. Describe the different parts of the plant**
- 3. Discuss the functions of the plant parts in the growing process**
4. Complete a worksheet on the parts of a plant
5. Write a response to an application question

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## **Step 4:** Address Expectations & Educational Support Questions

### **All Students**

- Plant seeds

### **Jordan will**

- Opportunity: Plant a seed at same time as other students
- Accommodation: **Direct** others (dig up, put in, cover up, water over)
- Language: Use preposition and verbs in phrases
- IA Role: Modeling, Prompt hierarchy
- VS: VD book, Prep and verb cards

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# Descriptive Teaching, Talking, and Talking

Gail M. Van Tatenhove, PA, MS, CCC-SP

Conversations with Gail, April 2015

## At-A-Glance “Sentence Builder Chart”



This sentence builder chart is a commercial product from a product (Core Vocabulary Classroom Kit) sold by Gail Van Tatenhove and is pre-made for students using Unity or LAMP Words for Life; or with printed words only to customize for any program or AAC device/app. The NALB comes on a CD for you to print and put together. Go to [www.vantatenhove.com](http://www.vantatenhove.com) for more information.

## Step 4: Address Expectations & Educational Support Questions

### All Students

- Describe the parts of the plant
  - Flowers = top, pretty part
  - Stem = Long, middle part
  - Leaves = outside or side part
  - Root = bottom part, under ground, dirty part

### Jordan will

- Opportunity: Describe at least 1 part during group activity, describe each part during 1:1 time
- Accommodation: Use CV descriptions from Step 3.
- Language: **Describe** with an adjective and/or preposition
- IA Role: Modeling, Prompt hierarchy
- VS: VD, adjective and preposition cards

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## Step 4: Address Expectations & Educational Support Questions

### All Students

- Discuss the functions of the plant parts in the growing process
  - Flowers – has seeds, helps make more plants
  - Stem – keeps plant up, carries water and food
  - Leaves – makes light into food
  - Roots – keeps plant in ground, bring in food and water
  - Photosynthesis – light into food
  - Support – keeps up
  - Absorb – take in
  - Nutrients – good things from food

### Jordan will

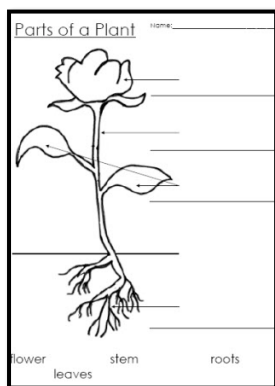
- Opportunity: Discuss 1 function during group activity, discuss each function during 1:1 time
- Accommodation: Use CV descriptions from Step 3.
- Language: **Discuss** with a simplified verb or verb phrase,
- IA Role: Modeling, Prompt hierarchy, circle words, present phrase cards
- VS: VD, function phrases

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## Step 4: Address Expectations & Educational Support Questions

### All Students

- Complete a worksheet on parts of a plant



### Jordan will

- Opportunity: Complete worksheet with a peer
- Accommodation: Number each line (1, 2, 3, 4); ABCD each part
- Language: Name of parts or A, B, C, D
- IA Role: Adapt worksheet, supervise completion with peer
- VS: codes for part words

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## Step 4: Address Expectations & Educational Support Questions

### All Students

- Write a short paragraph (of at least 3 sentences) on why plants are important to us

### Jordan will

- Opportunity: Write with EcoPoint connected to computer with writing program
- Modification: Write 2 sentences
- Language: at least 3 words/sentence, prompt use of verbs
- IA Role: Prompt verbs, help arranging words, do capitalization and punctuation
- VSM: VD, vocabulary cards



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## Realistic Expectations

Simple Start	one-on-one before small or large group
	short, manageable lessons
	limit use of extra materials and visuals
Selective Implementation	with the fellow students in small groups
	subjects/lessons
Systematic, Steady	build in accountability as a team
	incrementally increase use across subject areas, lessons, and communication partners
Some becomes Spontaneous	learned words in AAC system
	can implement DT "on-the-fly"

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## Perspective on Extended Vocabulary

- Extended vocabulary words are usually the specific content words of a lesson
- The content words of the lesson are NOT bad words
- Hearing and learning content words is important for language enrichment,
  - but putting the emphasis on them in a lesson, when the student hasn't learned the core vocabulary, is not a good use of time when learning to talk with an AAC device/app

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## Essential Subject-Specific Words

- Some subject-specific content words are essential to a subject and should, if not already, be added.



Example from Unity®60 Sequenced, from Prentke Romich Company. Used with permission. 76

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## Subject-Specific Academic Words

- Identify essential subject-specific words
  - How many concepts of a subject are core vocabulary words?
  - What words make participation in a **subject** a lot easier because **they are programmed** in the device?
    - Example a: Add critical language arts words
    - Example 2: Add math words that NOT in most AAC vocabulary sets: fraction, difference, borrow, pattern, difference, equation, remainder



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## Descriptive Talking and Writing

- Written text requires a topic sentence which generally requires specificity. After the topic sentence, then core vocabulary can take over to express supporting ideas, but for the topic sentence, you need lesson content words.
- Example: Which is the better topic sentence?
  - "My favorite **person who writes books** is the **woman who wrote about old days when women needed a husband.**"
  - "My favorite **author** is **Jane Austin.**"

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## Lesson Fact Writing

- Assignment: Write a paragraph of what you learned about Saturn. Include at least 3 facts.
- Peers writing: “**Saturn** is the 6th **planet** from the **sun**. We can see it from **Earth**. It has **rings** and many **moons**. It is made up of a lot of **gas**. It is very light and turns fast.”

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## Lesson Fact Writing

- Assignment: Write a paragraph of what you learned about Saturn. Include at least 3 facts.
- Peers writing: “            is the 6th            from the            . We can see it from            . It has            and many            . It is made up of a lot of            . It is very light and turns fast.”

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















## Lesson Application Writing

- Assignment: What would it be like to live on Saturn?
- Peers writing: "Living on **Saturn** would be hard. You would need a floating house because it is made up of **gas**. It is very cold and moves so fast you would blow right off. I don't think anyone should try and live there."















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## Joshua's Writing

Paragraph with 3 Facts:

Saturn    is   6.   6  
Ring  around  it.   
It  goes  around  fast.   
It is  light. 

Application:

I don't want   to live   
Saturn.     
No  fun  because  cold.   
No  Cars  movie  there. 

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## Simple, Supplemental AAC Solutions

1. Sticky Notes with words/drawings on them
  - Lay them out and student eye/hand selects needed word
2. Lesson-specific Manual Communication Boards
  - Develop manual boards with the lesson-specific vocabulary
  - Create and maintain a paper and/or e-file of board

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## Simple, Supplemental AAC Solutions

3. Encoded Text
  - Add letters or numbers to key words in print-based materials
  - Student says the letter or number to “say” the word
4. Word Banks or Word Lists
  - Copy type or select from bank/list
  - Useful with print-based materials
  - An option with some educational software programs

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# Descriptive Teaching, Talking, and Talking

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## Simple, Supplemental AAC Solutions

### 3. Spelling Strategies

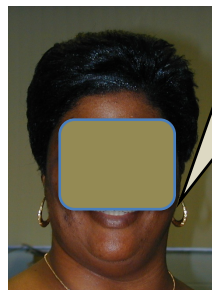
- Traditional spelling (with use of word prediction)
- Approximated Spelling (with use of word prediction)
- Initial Sound Spelling
  - Student – provides initial letter or key letters (J A)
  - Teacher/Assistant spells the rest or helps student select word from Word Prediction window

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## Testimonials



Lucy (IA): I never knew what was in the machine or how to say it. Now I do, I can model and I can help him!



Cynthia (teacher): It helps me know what the student has learned. And it is so much easier to work with him!

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Thank you.

To contact Gail for further discussion  
and questions, email her at  
[gvantatenhove@cfl.rr.com](mailto:gvantatenhove@cfl.rr.com)

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