

Personalized Gesture Dictionary

A Gesture Dictionary contains a list of conventional & non-conventional gestures, body movements, vocalizations or other identified signals thought to be used regularly by the individual communicator that may be shaped and refined via “verbal referencing” (say outloud the behavior/movement that you observed) to reinforce communicative attempts and perhaps establish a more reliable set of nonverbal communication behaviors. A personalized Gesture Dictionary is especially critical for those individuals who are Emergent Communicators and who have limited verbal or symbolic communication skills. Interview of communication partners who are familiar with the individual is critical to the identification of these signals/behaviors. Once documented, the Gesture Dictionary should then be shared with ALL communication partners to support and reinforce communicative attempts and interactions by the student. This should be reviewed and updated regularly by the team.

Name of Individual: _____Student Sam_____

Date:_____8/28/2016_____

What the student does (gesture, sound, body movements etc.)	What we think it means	Communication Partner Response	Comments/Clarification
Pause, eyes may look up and slightly left?, lower breathing rate; sometimes eyebrows draw together with a little frown line between them (his serious look)	”I’m thinking about that. Give me a minute.”	Say to Student: “You’re thinking about that.” Give him 5-10 seconds to think without anyone saying more. Then ask: “Are you ready? ” or whatever might fit the moment/activity.	Student seems to be thinking about and processing what was said or processing a new experience (such as activating a new toy attached to a switch with help from an adult)
Kick legs and wave arms enthusiastically, sometimes coos/babble	Excited - ”I can hardly wait. Let’s get started.”	Say to Student: “I see you waving and kicking. You look ready to ____.”	He appears to think what you’ve suggested is a good idea and he wants to try it.
Extends his arms, pushes with his hands for about 5-10 seconds	”I’m all done.”	Say to him: “You are pushing the ____ away. You’re all done ”	Acknowledge and stop activity immediately when this behavior is observed to “teach” how we are interpreting this behavior.

Updated 6/2017