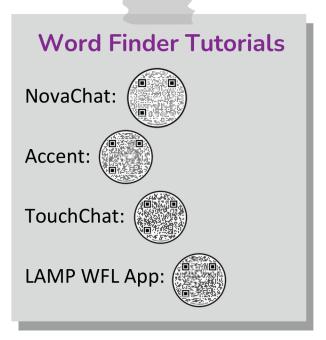AAC language **lab**®

How do you talk about academic concepts on an AAC system?

Use Descriptive Teaching: You can use a descriptive teaching method to teach the student the target word. Read more about descriptive teaching on the next page.

Use Word Finder: You can use Word Finder on the student's device to see if the word is in the student's vocabulary. See tutorials for Word Finder below.

Consider adding the Word to the Vocabulary: If your student is demonstrating a higher level of language, and you think the word will be used by the student in other environments, you can add the word to their AAC system.

photosynthesis??

Word Finder Tutorials

NovaChat:

Accent:

TouchChat:

LAMP WFL App:

AAC language lab®

Descriptive Teaching

What?

A way to teach academic vocabulary and concepts using core words and other high frequency vocabulary. Rather than ask questions that require a single word response with content specific vocabulary, descriptive teaching provides a way in which AAC learners can talk about the concepts and terminology with vocabulary that is already on their device.

Instead of: "We are learning about force. A force is a push or pull on something."

Try: "We can use force to make something move."

Why?

Teaching content-specific vocabulary alone is not enough for AAC users to learn concepts and academic vocabulary. Descriptive teaching helps AAC learners to understand the meaning of academic vocabulary and learn to describe the word and/or concept using vocabulary that is already in their device.

Core words make up 80% of the words we say everyday. The other 20% of words are called "fringe" words, and include a lot of academic vocabulary.

For most schools, Tier 1 vocabulary is an expansion of core vocabulary. For example, "food" is a Tier 1 vocabulary word but is not considered a core word in AAC. Therefore, we could describe the word "hunting" as "how they get food" because "food" is a Tier 1 word.

Frequently Occurring Preschool Vocabulary List:
(Marvin et al., 1994)

Descriptive Teaching

How?

Communication partners model definitions and key concepts for academic vocabulary using core words on an AAC system rather than adding these words to the device. The AAC learner then repeats this information back using core words as the communication partners ask open-ended questions to establish understanding, application, and engagement.

Modeling is important for AAC communicators to learn their AAC system. When you talk to your students verbally, activate buttons on their AAC system. Your AAC learners need to see and hear their language in action in order to learn it.

Where?

Everywhere! Descriptive teaching can happen anywhere! Not just facilitated by teachers in the classroom or only for academic vocabulary. The descriptive teaching method can be used to teach and talk about less commonly used words. Anyone can model and use descriptive teaching when talking with AAC learners.

When appropriate, encourage AAC communicators to use descriptive talking rather than use fringe vocabulary:

Instead of: "galaxy"
Try: "stars and planets; big black space"

Instead of: "Blue's Clues"
Try: "blue dog TV"