

Sharing News Between Home and School

Involving students in sharing their news about their day at school or their news from home is a great time to develop language skills. Most of us like talking about ourselves...what we have been doing, our stories and events from the day etc. Doing this daily with a familiar structure and visuals can really help students using coreboards, PODD books or communication devices to learn to navigate around their systems and build vocabulary in a meaningful and motivating communication exchange.

How to start the conversation

Find a time towards the end of the school day (school news) or the end of the evening or weekend (home news) to sit and chat with your student/child about their news using their coreboard, PODD book or communication device.

Use a set of visuals to provide prompts for the things you might talk about...



Use a laminated sheet to record the answers your student or child gives you **by you** writing the information down on the sheet as your student/child chats using their communication system. This isn't a writing activity for your student/child...it's a chatting time...you are the scribe of the conversation and are recording the chat so they can share it with someone later.

You show the visual and ask the questions and your student (with support in the beginning) navigates to the appropriate page in their system to provide some answers.

E.g. You ask them what was their favourite thing they did today? (show favourite visual). They navigate to 'school subjects' page and select 'swimming'. You write 'swimming' down for them on the sheet.

The student/child then takes the sheet home to share with family or takes the sheet to school to share with the school team.

Important!

Take your time completing this with your student/child. There is so much language to be found in their AAC system, and so much navigating to different places to find the words needed, that it is such a valuable learning time. Brainstorm together where in the system to find vocab to describe any 'out of the ordinary' things that have happened that day that your student/child might really want to share. Another fantastic language skill!

Make your own sheet using Word. The questions you ask should match the visual prompts you are using. You can make the sheet as simple or as complex as you like, to match the language levels of the child you are using it with.

Dear	Dear
Today is	Do you want to know what I did on the weekend?
At school today I did	I went
My favourite was	I visited
I played with	I ate
Today I felt	I played
Tomorrow I need	I watched
Special News	My weekend was
With lots of	My other news
Signed	Signed:

Repetition with Variety

Having a framework for recording a student's news from home or school allows students to become familiar with a routine and be confident in participating in it with increasing independence, while not becoming bored as it will always include some variety. Home school news is a great example of this...it can be repeated each day but the content will always be different.

Verbal Referencing (talking aloud about what you are doing as you model it to students)

Do lots of talking out loud with your student/child about where they need to navigate to, as you move around the system. This will help them learn the pathways and categories themselves and move towards being able to independently navigate to find words in the future.

E.g. Who did you play with today? Let's go to 'People/School friends' page and find all your friends.

Signing the letter

Being able to write their own name is a really important first step in developing literacy skills for our students with complex communication needs. Adding this component in at the end of the letter gives another opportunity for our students to practise this. Writing your name independently using an alternative pencil (not copying over or copying from a model) for students who may not have the fine motor skills to use a pencil or pen has been covered in a previous tip of the month (I can write my name using an alternative pencil). Here is a great time to grab your alternative pencil and let your student sign the letter themselves. Remember to write down exactly what letters they point to and afterwards read it back and say...'this is how I would write your name' and then model the correct way underneath their version.

Happy news sharing 😊