ADAPTIVATION
INCORPORATED
The World at a Touch

Communication and the Use of Tangible Symbols

AAC-29

Friday, January 31

8:00AM – 9:00AM

Misconception

In this world of fast-changing technology, the newest and fanciest offer the best options for our clients to be successful communicators

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Truth

We must begin intervention at our client's current level in order for them to progress to their most functional level of communication

Important to Remember

Research shows there are no prerequisites to communication intervention but there is a logical sequence.

So how do we determine our client's current communication level?

Best to use a combination of standardized assessment and observation

The Communication Matrix

- Developed by Dr. Charity Rowland, Oregon Health and Science University
- Assessment tool designed to pinpoint current communication level
- Describes 7 levels of communication development
- Provides a framework for determining logical goals

Level 1: Pre-Intentional Behavior

- Behavior is a reflection of the individuals general state (i.e. hungry, sleepy, uncomfortable)
- Behavior is not under their control
- Developmentally occurs between 0-3 months

Level 2: Intentional Behavior

- Behavior is under their control but is NOT used for communication
- Caregiver interprets and acts on behavior\
- Developmentally occurs between 3-8 months of age

Level 3:Unconventional Communication

- Communication is pre-symbolic (does not involve symbols)
- Communication begins to be intentional
- Behaviors are considered “unconventional because they would not be socially acceptable at an older age (movements, vocalizations, gestures, facial expression)
- Developmentally occurs between 6-12 months

Level 4: Conventional Communication

- Communication still Pre-symbolic
- Considered “conventional” because behaviors are socially acceptable and we continue to use them to accompany language as we mature
- Behaviors include nodding, pointing, waving
- Developmentally occurs between 12-18 months

Level 5: Concrete Symbol Stage

- Symbolic communication begins
- Concrete symbols look like, feel like, move like or sound like the thing they represent
- Include: objects, pictures, gestures or sounds
- Developmentally occurs between 12-24 months
- Adaptivation's Tangible Object Cards are a form of concrete symbols

Level 6: Abstract Symbol Stage

- Symbols used are abstract—they are NOT physically similar to what they represent
- Symbols include: speech, sign language, Braille, printed words/pictures
- Symbols are used one at a time
- Developmentally occurs between 12-24 months

Level 7: Language

- Can combine symbols
- Understands that the meaning of the combination varies with the order of the symbols
- Can use both concrete and abstract symbols
- Developmentally occurs around 24 months

What is a symbol?

- Represents people, objects, places, activities, or concepts
- Allow the user to refer to things that have happened in the past, will occur in the future or are spatially out of sight
- Can be either abstract or concrete

Abstract vs. Concrete

Abstract Symbols

- No obvious relationship between the symbol and what it represents
- Make up languages
- Can include: speech
  manual sign
  print

Concrete Symbols

- Do have an obvious relationship to what they represent
- Include iconic gestures (pat the chair to mean sit down)
- Include both 3 dimensional (tangible objects) and 2 dimensional (pictures)
  **look closely an make sure the pictures are concrete

Characteristics of Tangible Symbols

- Made up of real objects, miniature objects, partial objects, or textures
- Manipulable—meaning you can hold them, touch them and discriminate them tactilely
- They are permanent and don’t have to be recalled from memory
- They are symbolic (represent something else)
- Include a two dimensional symbol to support communication

Who can benefit from using Tangible Symbols?

- Deaf-Blind (first described in the 1960's)
- Developmental disability
- Autism or pervasive developmental disorder
- Severe intellectual disability
- Severe vision impairment
- Severe orthopedic impairment
- Multiple disabilities

Two approaches to the use of Tangible Symbols

1. Individualized
2. Shared

Individualized Approach

- Objects are individualized for each user
- Helps ensure the objects are meaningful
- Helps ensure the objects are motivating

Advantages of a Shared Approach

- Language is not individualized-it is shared. For you to understand me we must “share” the same language.
- Practicality—it is easier to keep track of, house, and maintain the symbols for multiple users if they are all using the same symbols
- Expense– it is more difficult and expensive to replace lost individual items than shared items that can be purchased in bulk

Continued…

- Makes consistent implementation easier for staff (we MUST keep staff in mind)
- The communicator learns the intended representation of the object through the process of repetition. This becomes more important than the object itself
- Helps provide continuity within an organization

Continued…

- There are already those out in the field using shared tangible symbols effectively!

Adaptivation's Tangible Object Cards

- Vocabulary chosen based on findings in the literature and input from professionals in the field
- Includes a core set of 20 vocabulary and 6 supplemental sets for a total of 50 cards
- Each object is attached to a 5x7 card to establish symbol consistency
- Include multiple options for adding 2-dimensional visual cue

The goal of an object communication system

- Provide a means for the learner to attain a higher level of communication
- Provide scaffolding of knowledge from what the learner knows to what he doesn’t know
- Provide the pre-symbolic communicator a way to move into the world of symbolic communication

bathroom
bathroom
outside
read

comb
play
brush teeth
clean
cook
computer
drink
dress

cook
outside
Tangible Object Cards
CORE
bathroom
bed
brush teeth
clean
comb
computer
cook
dress
drink
eat
game
listen
money
outside
play
read
shop
TV
wash
work
play
clean
drink
cook

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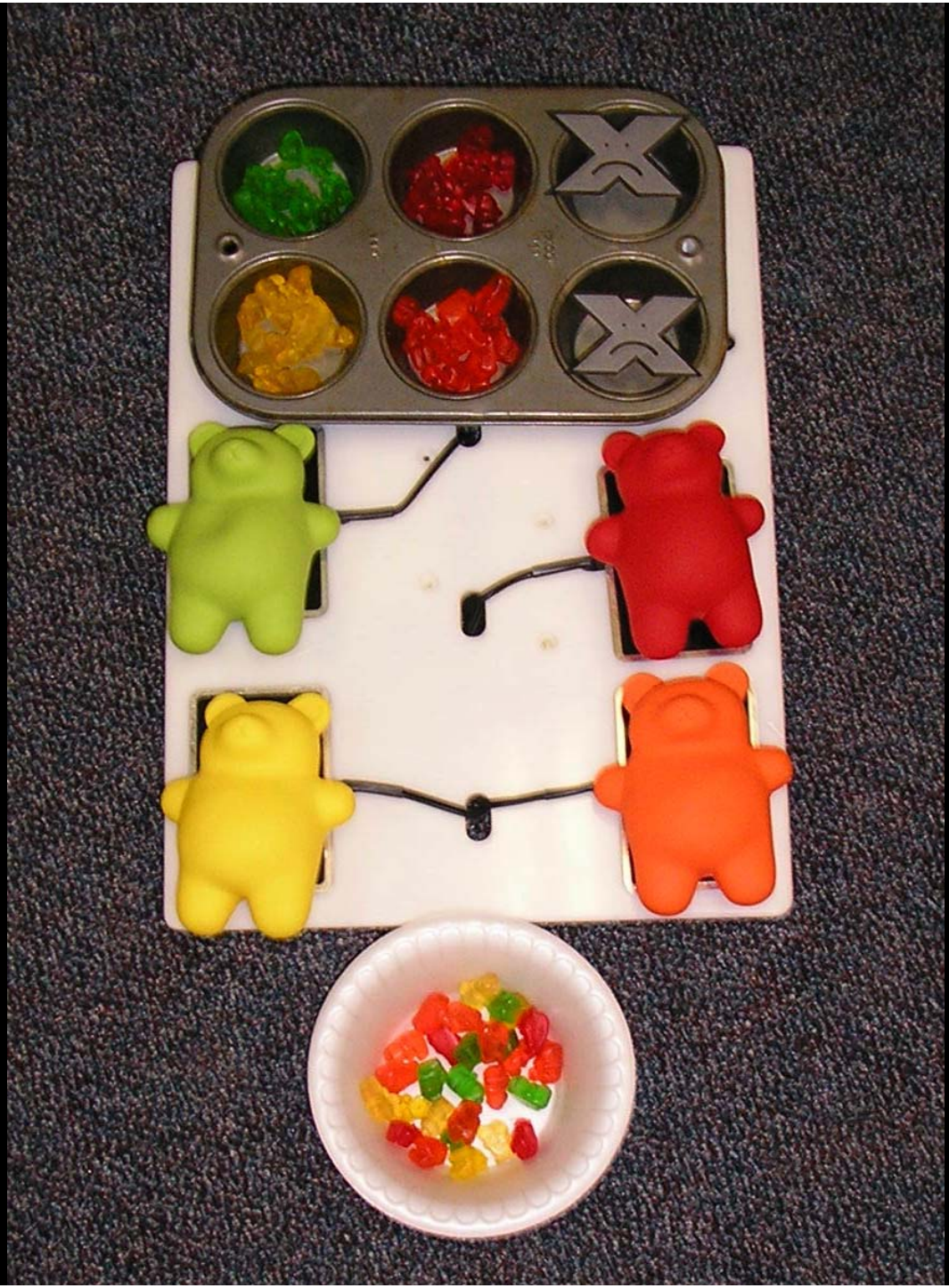
ADAPTIVATION
red
blue
yellow
green
purple
orange
pink
white
HARIBO
GOLD-BEARS
ORIGINAL



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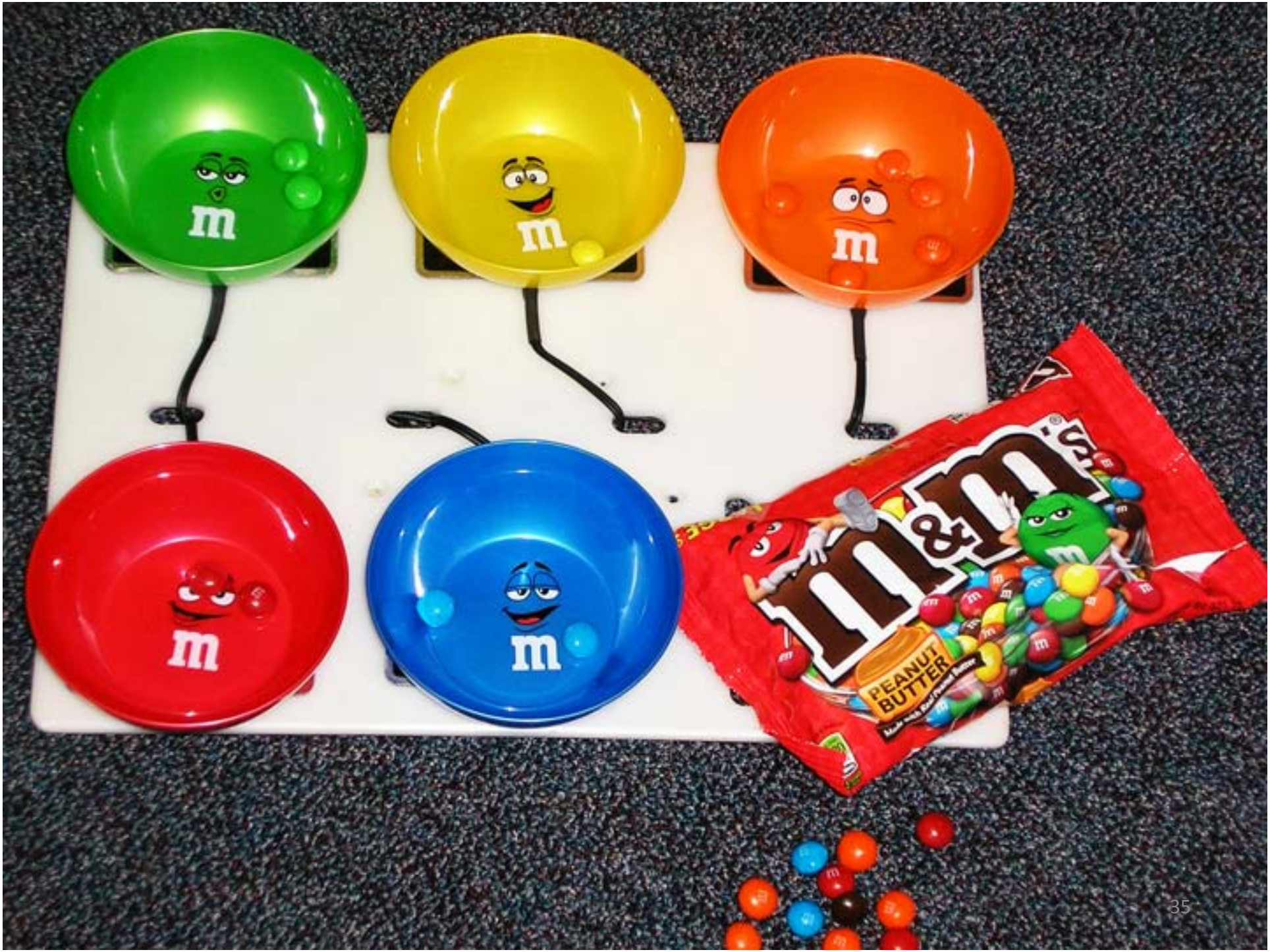
dig
Better Homes
kids
Marigold

Let's Cook
SKIPPY
Welch's


m
m
m
m
m
m&m
PEANUT
BUTTER

Everywhere an Oink-Oink
LinkSwitch
ADAPTIVATION

ADAPTIVATION
RANDOMIZER
Dessert Bingo
cupcake
birthday cake
chocolate chip cookie
cherry pie
sundae
jello
cotton candy
candy bar
strawberry shake
Rice Krispies bars
smoothie
frozen yogurt
pudding
candy
ice cream cone
ice cream sandwich

HONEY
GRAHAMS
NET WT 14.4 OZ (408g)
HERSHEY'S
Milk Chocolate
Over 50 Variations of the Campfire Classic
So Much
S'MORE
to Do
Becky Rasmussen

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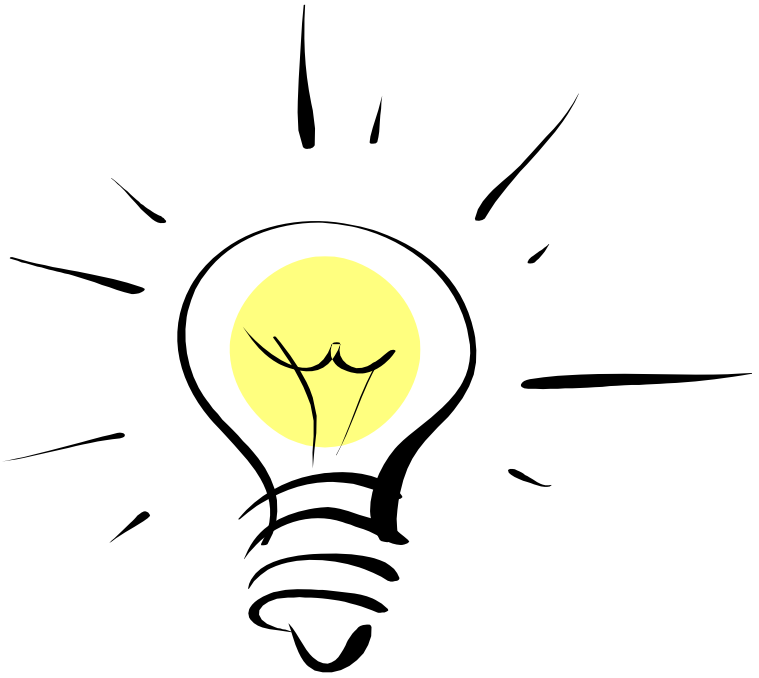
Adaptivation
Rhymes With Cat
cat
mat
hat
rat
bat

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
3
three kittens
4
four balls

Yahtzee
RANDOMIZER
MIC

cook
cook
Betty Crocker
1 TBS
15 ml
1/2 TSP
2.5ml

play

Ways to Get Ideas

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