

TRANSCRIPT: TV1 – AAC chat

Jo Heywood

It's really important that girls have the opportunity to chat with each other. In a busy school environment, there's quite a lot of focus on lessons but, actually, a really important aspect of a school day is socialising with each other and you've got to, sometimes, just engineer opportunities for social communication.

Lauren has cerebral palsy, which means that she has difficulty coordinating her muscles and that includes the muscles that she uses to talk. She does have some words and people who are very familiar with her can understand what she's trying to say, but people who don't know her, and also when she's wanting to say quite a lot, that's when the message breaks down.

Lauren uses the Echo 2 with a 'Learning, Language and Living Programme' software package on it. That allows her to construct messages and put them into sentences. She uses the communication aid with her hands to create the message. Alternatively, you can put pre-recorded messages in there, so she can deliver longer messages. It's quite a sophisticated piece of machinery because it will also allow Lauren to change the tense of her language, so she's able to say she's going or she went.

Hannah uses a DynaVox Vmax communication system with an interact page, which allows you to create messages around scenarios. So, if she was going to go to the supermarket, it can have lots of set phrases that are relevant for that setting. Again, she can have pre-set messages stored on her button. She particularly likes her news button to be able to relay quite a lot of information about what she's been doing at the weekend, what she did last night. It will also allow her to construct some simple messages.

Hannah operates the communication aid with her knee through row-column scanning so, physically, it's quite effortful for her but we try to counter-balance that by how many messages are available on the one page. So, we try to make it as quick and easy as possible for her but still provide her with a means of communicating what she wants to.

And we had Chloe, who is using speech and gesture and also she used a Tech/Talk 8 in the session.

A really important aspect is bridging into their adult life. The idea is that these individuals, when supported and with the right communication aid devices, should be able to be very independent and advocate for themselves about what they're wanting to do with their life, and it's really important that they have opportunities to extend their practice out into the real world, so going into supermarkets, going to the cinemas, going into the cafés, and being given opportunities to communicate in those settings and to do so confidently.

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