

# This week's PODD communication focus...

## Commenting: Using Descriptions



*"Modelling teaches the child more than just "this pictograph means this". Modelling for genuine communicative purposes in the child's natural environments also teaches children concepts that are important for the pragmatic use of their system such as, "Oh I can say that using...."; "This is the type of context I can say it in"; "That's how I go about taking up my turn to say that in this situation." Other people using the child's AAC system can also assist a child to develop a positive self esteem as they experience that this way of communicating is valued and responded to by others." (Porter, 2007, p. 76)*

- Modelling the use of your child's communication method to communicate for genuine communicative purposes every day is the key to helping them become a competent communicator.
- One of the communicative purposes that can often be neglected when modelling language is commenting, particularly about the properties of objects, people, and places in the environment. People often think about providing choices for activities, and helping their child to express their preferences, but forget how often we make comments in our day-to-day conversations. Further still, commenting and using descriptive language is one of the tools your child must adopt to demonstrate their knowledge throughout their education.
- **The category in PODD called 'descriptions' will allow you to comment on so many things in your child's environment – colours, shapes, size, feels, tastes, numbers and number-related concepts, and the weather.**
- Verbally commenting on these features of objects, people and places is something that often happens naturally when adults speak to children as a means of helping them develop a greater vocabulary. **What we need to focus on is using these opportunities to model this language using the descriptions category in the PODD.**  
For example,
  - if you wanted to comment on the colour of a toy, you could say: *'I'm telling you something, it's about now, descriptions, colour, red'*
  - if you wanted to comment about the size of an animal, you could say: *'I'm telling you something, it's about now, descriptions, size, tiny'*
  - if you wanted to comment about the feel of the carpet, you could say: *'I'm telling you something, it's about now, descriptions, feels, rough'*
- You can also add the names of objects to these comments, by using the 'go to categories' function. For example, 'tiny' – go to categories, animals, turn the page, bugs/insects, 'worm', OR 'red' – go to categories, activities, outside activities, 'ball'.
- Keep in mind that *"children do not always have to be intently watching or attending all the time to make modelling worthwhile. Peripheral views of modelling, whilst less effective to learn the meaning of each symbol, still provide the child with useful experiences of how their AAC systems can be used to effectively interact with others." (Porter, 2007, p. 77)*
- **When modelling these types of messages that can have longer navigational pathways, ensure that you regularly recap the message as you go. You can do this as you are turning the pages by simply repeating what you have said so far: "So I'm telling you something about now...."**