

2016-2017 LEVELS OF SYMBOLIC COMMUNICATION

The descriptions of the Levels of Symbolic Development below are meant to support the instruction and assessment of students taking the VTAAP. Students are not expected exhibit all of the features listed for a particular entry point. This is simply a guide to some of the common characteristics of students at different levels of symbol use. Sometimes a student's physical disability will mask their cognitive skills, other times sensory or physical access issues will impact the child's ability to receive information. Lastly, students need opportunities to learn new skills. Without the appropriate experiences and resources, the child may not develop the skills. *Symbolic levels tell us that the student is able to do at least this much, but in fact may be able to do much more...*

| Level A | Level B | Level C |
|--|--|---|
| Abstract Symbolic | Early Symbolic | Pre-Symbolic |
| Expressive Communication | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses some sort of symbolic communication system: speech, signs, text, line drawings, photos etc. communicates in multi-word utterances | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> communicates using symbols of any kind: speech, signs, line drawings, photos etc. communication purposes may be primarily wants/needs, or may serve a range of functions (e.g., comment, question, socialize) length of utterance ranges from single word to multi-word messages | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> communicates with vocalizations, actions, gestures, eye point, facial expressions, change in muscle tone, etc. does not yet consistently use a symbolic or representation communication system (e.g., words, pictures, signs, etc.). also may be working to develop a consistent motor signal for communicating (e.g., controlled start/stop to move hand, raise eyes, vocalize etc.) |
| Reading Skills | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> has some reading abilities: simple CVC words, individual sight words, short phrases, or simple connected text | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> may know the names of letters; recognizes text vs. illustrations | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> beginning awareness of text as meaningful |
| Writing | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> has some basic writing skills: generating a word, phrase or sentence related to a topic may use letter tiles, paper keyboard, computer, speech device or other AT tools to create product due to physical access issues | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> produces written work using line drawn or picture supports uses spoken words to dictate thoughts that are written by a scribe uses typical or adapted tools to write, trace, or manipulate letters, make marks, draw. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> explores range of writing tools: pencil, pen, marker, keyboard, letter tiles |

| Speech Generating Device (SGD) | | |
|--|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • may use a high-tech dynamic display system • large vocabulary set • text-to-speech | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • can use high-tech (computerized) or mid-tech (recorded) speech system • vocabulary set size varies based on language needs, but should include sufficient words/phrases for participation in curriculum activities and learning higher levels of language | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • can use pre-programmed single-target/message devices paired with specific activities • multi-message devices can be used as tools for curriculum participation, social interactions, learning language and access skills |
| Learning Emphasis | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • expanding existing academic concepts, skills and knowledge • establishing a basis for future learning • generalizing application of learned skills • developing facility with selecting and using appropriate learning tools (e.g., AT supports, graphic organizers, resources) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • establishing and strengthening foundational academic skills • applying existing skills to new activities, formats, and materials • developing more abstract forms of communication and representation • expanding repertoire of learning contexts to expand vocabulary and language functions • opportunities to develop conventional literacy skills • opportunities to expand personal knowledge • developing facility with AT tools to support | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • producing more consistent signals for expressive communication • pairing specific responses to particular contexts and/or materials to demonstrate learning • increasing discrimination skills across materials and contexts • increasing engagement with a range of activities, environments and materials • developing facility with AT tools |
| Performance Options – Complexity Suggestions | | |
| <p>select conduct determine analyze classify predict generate compare justify</p> | <p>choose assist identify examine sort supply complete match</p> | <p>indicate participate acknowledge explore experience anticipate respond imitate copy repeat recognize</p> |

Symbolic Development Continuum

PRE-SYMBOLIC - EARLY SYMBOLIC - ABSTRACT SYMBOLIC



body/expressions
vocalization
simple motor signal
objects
gestures

objects
gestures
photos
line drawings
speech
sign

line drawings
sign
speech
text/words
reading