



# Communication



**For children who are non-verbal, every sound, facial expression, gesture, and movement is their way of communicating with you! Some children who are non-verbal may feel frustration at not being understood, which can result in tantrums, pushing, pulling, or they may express their excitement with the same behaviors. Remember that a child's behavior is a form of communication not intentional disruption.**

## Communication Tips:

- Speak directly to that student. Even if he can't answer verbally, it is a sign of respect and connection. Get down to his level, make eye contact, and say hello!
- Observe! Some children may make sounds instead of using words. What sounds do they make when playing their favorite game? Or during transition time, when they don't want to stop playing? Their sounds and bodies are communicating constantly.
- Ask yes or no questions versus open-ended questions. "Do you want to paint right now?" versus "What game do you want to play?" When you ask direct questions, point to the activity you are referencing. This helps the student identify your words with the activity.
- Learn key signs in American Sign Language. It can reduce frustration if those signs are used in that student's classroom or at home. Teach those core signs to the general education students so they can use them too!
- Sing! Songs are a great way to communicate. Find out what that student's favorite song is and sing it with her or make up a song with that student's name in it.
- Speak normally. You don't have to slow down what you say or speak loudly. However, the student may need a little extra time to respond. Wait for them to communicate at their pace. Communicate back to them what you heard them say: "Oh, you want to use the blue paint now."
- Ask the student to repeat himself if you don't understand his words. "Can you tell me what you just said again?" If that doesn't work, ask them to show you what they want. "Can you point to the toy you want?"
- Communicate through play! Balls, bubbles, hide-and-seek, and music are great ways to communicate. Teach peers to do the same.
- Enlist peer buddies! If you can't understand the non-verbal student and a general education peer does, ask that peer to help translate.