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Simple Strategies to Promote Social Inclusion During Literacy Activities

AAC-35

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Meaningful social interactions

- Foundational for **early language** learning (Kuhl, Tsao, & Liu, 2003)
- Support **vocabulary** development (Fenson et al., 1994)
- Offer contexts to support learning a **range of skills** (Bukowski et al., 2009)
- Prioritized by **families** as an indicator of **quality of life** for children with multiple disabilities (McCarty & Light, in preparation)
- Foundational for **building relationships** with others
- Improved **mental health** and quality of life
- Settings – home, preschool, community etc.



*May not occur naturally for children with complex communication needs who use augmentative and alternative communication (AAC; Therrien & Light, 2016)

Meaningful
social
interactions are
foundational for
fostering social
inclusion.



Fostering social inclusion



- Simply present in the same setting
- Simply taught by the same teacher
- Occurs naturally

- Thoughtful consideration to determine opportunities for:
 - Meaningful participation
 - Contribution
 - Engagement

Where can we start?

- Literacy activities in naturally occurring contexts
 - Ex: Interactive shared storybook reading

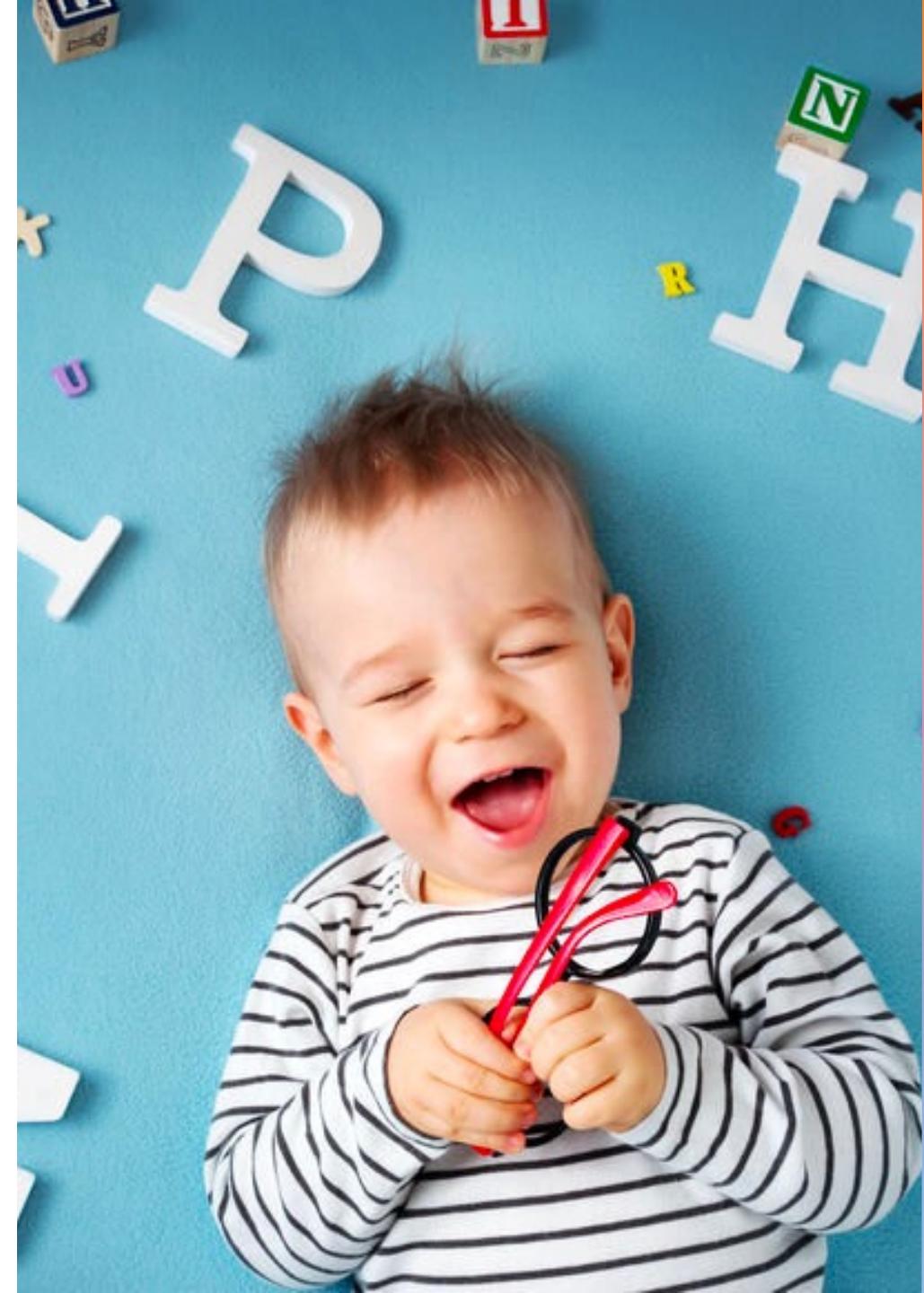




Interactive Shared Reading

Benefits of interactive shared reading

- Powerful context for **semantic development** (Justice et al., 2005) that can take place in the natural environment (e.g., home, school)
 - Exposure to a wealth of novel concepts
- Evidence of **increased expressive and receptive language** skills in children who may have limited speech (Boyle et al., 2019)
- Positive impact on the **parent-child relationship** (Canfield et al., 2021)
- Exposure to **early literacy skills**





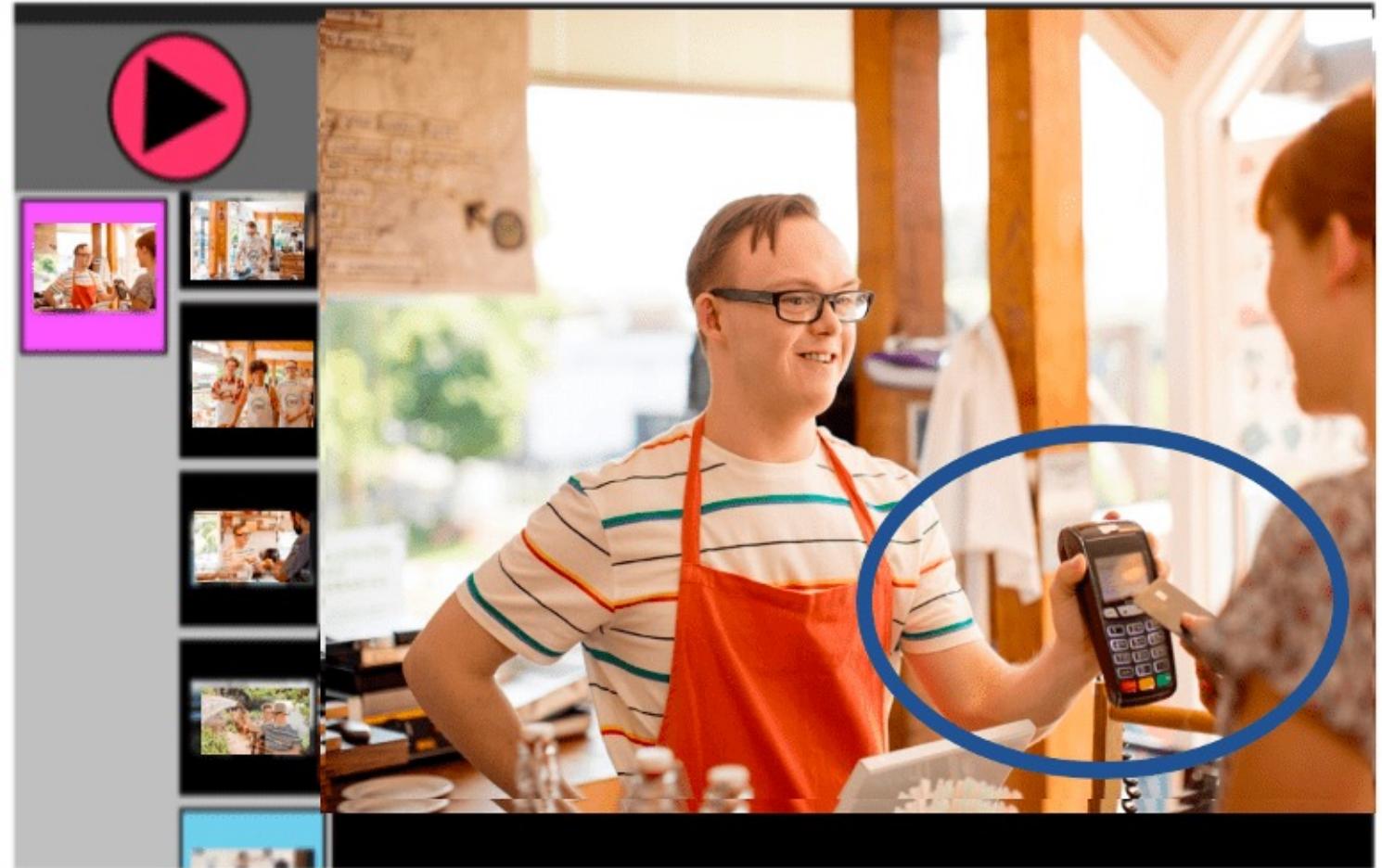
What does *interactive* shared reading entail?

- Moves beyond simply reading the text to a child. Rather, this encourages all involved to become **active participants in a conversation** about the book (Justice & Pence, 2005).
- Dialogue should **focus on the book** (e.g., storyline, characters, etc.)
- The adult partner aims to build upon what the child already knows and to **expand their language and knowledge of the world**.
- Quality & quantity

A photograph of a smiling woman and a young girl laughing together. The woman is on the left, wearing a white t-shirt, and the girl is on the right, wearing a pink tank top with a colorful heart pattern. They are both looking down at something off-camera with expressions of joy and amusement.

How can we support active participation for children with limited speech?

Visual Scene Displays (VSDs)



What is a
VSD?



EMBED VOCABULARY WITHIN
THE NATURAL CONTEXT



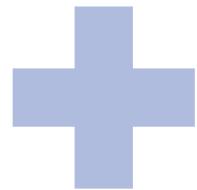
REPRESENT VOCABULARY
USING FAMILIAR DIGITAL
PHOTOGRAPHS



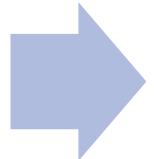
ALLOW VOCABULARY TO BE
ADDED IN THE MOMENT

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graph LR; A((Interactive shared reading)) --- B((+)); B --- C((Visual Scene Display (VSD))); C --> D((Optimal opportunities for social interaction)); D --> E[Meaningful participation]; D --> F[Distributed contribution]; D --> G[Active engagement];
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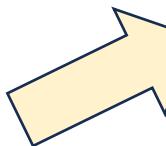
Interactive shared reading



Visual Scene Display (VSD)



Optimal opportunities for social interaction



Meaningful participation



Distributed contribution



Active engagement

Within this context, social interaction can be supported by:

1

Offering choices

2

Incorporating
naturalistic
interaction
strategies

3

Training
communication
partners

Within this context, social interaction can be supported by:

- **Offering choices**
 - What activity should we do: read vs. other?
 - Which book to read?
 - What hotspots could we program for the chosen book?
 - Strengths-based approach to identify supports that may increase a student's participation (Biggs & Robison, 2023)
 - Environmental changes
 - Build skills of communication partners

Within this context, social interaction can be supported by:

- **Incorporating naturalistic interaction strategies**
 - Strong evidence that these strategies are effective to support communication, participation, and language development for AAC users, as a component of AAC intervention (e.g., Gevarter & Zamora, 2018; Ganz et al., 2019)
 - May include (Schreibman et al., 2015):
 - Setting up an interactive context
 - Following the AAC user's lead and supporting balanced turns
 - Modeling language via speech and AAC
 - Providing opportunities for communication
 - Responding to and expanding on communication
 - Incorporating naturalistic and contingent reinforcement

Within this context, social interaction can be supported by:

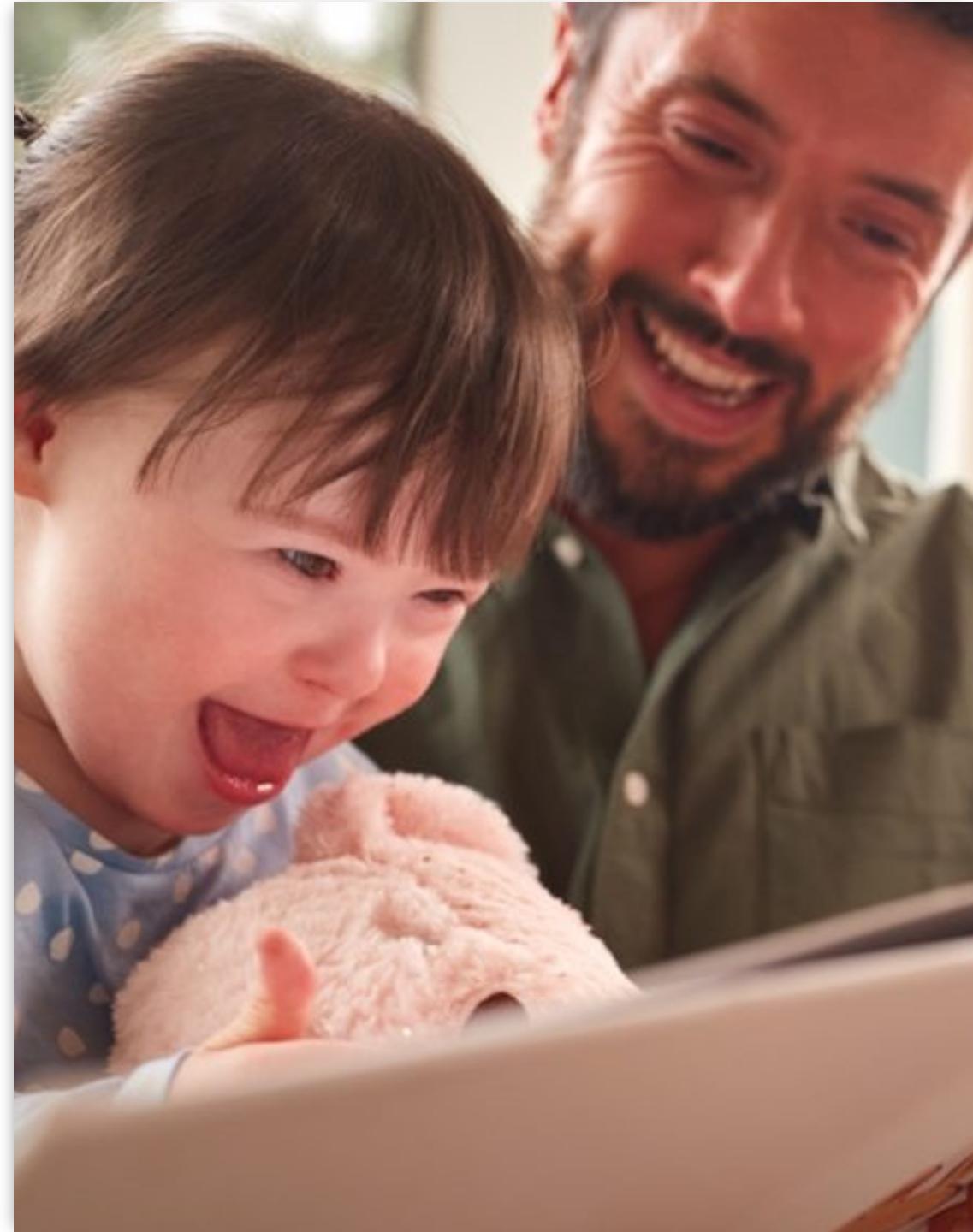
- **Training communication partners**
 - Highly effective evidence-based strategy (Douglas et al., 2022; Akemoglu et al., 2019; Kent-Welsh & McNaughton, 2005)
 - Communication partners can also be trained to incorporate naturalistic interaction strategies to support individuals with CCN, including modeling, expectant delay, commenting, providing opportunities for communication (e.g., asking an open-ended question), and responding to and expanding upon communication to build upon language development (Kent-Walsh et al, 2010; Kent-Walsh et al., 2015)

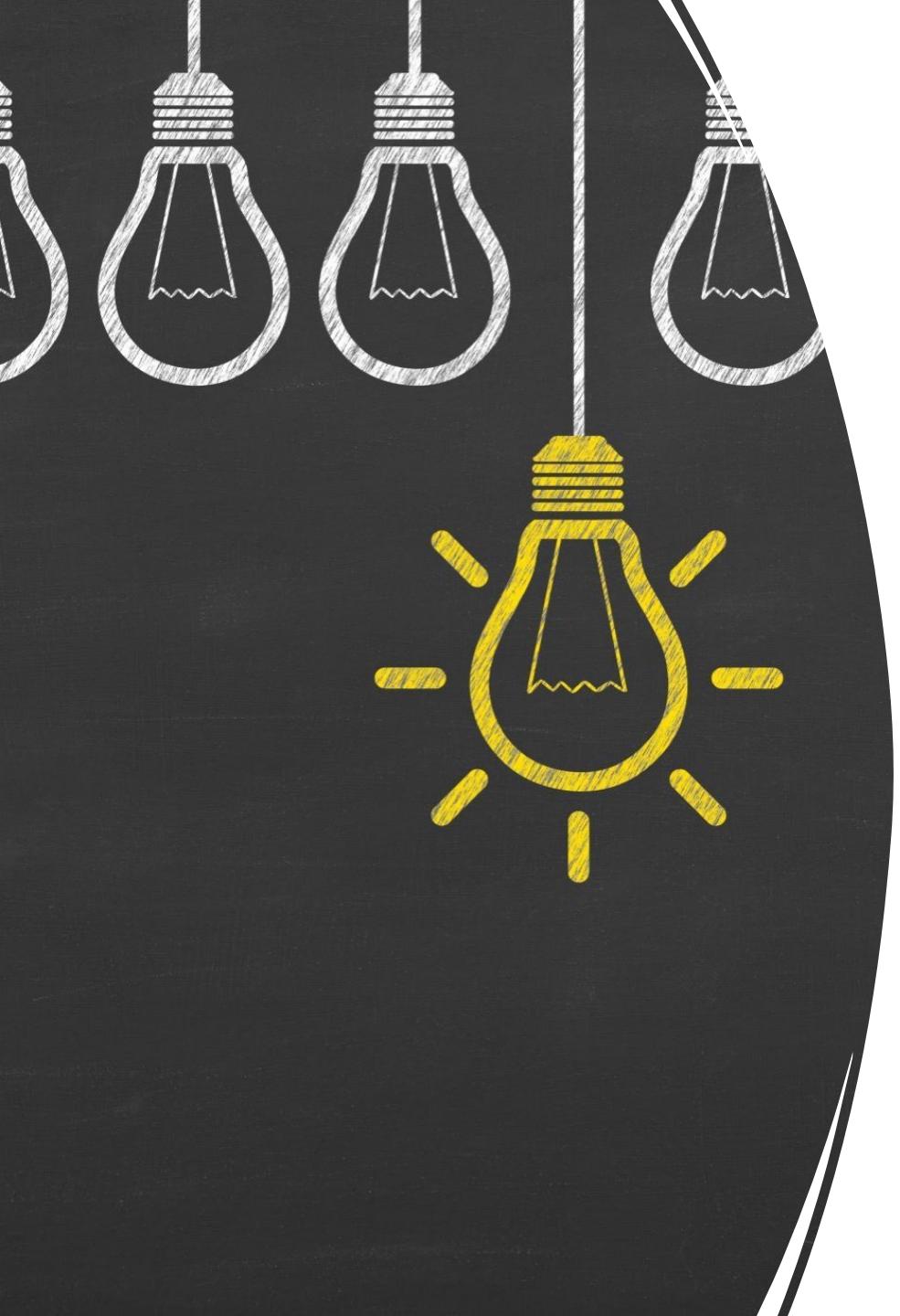
Within this context, social interaction can be supported by:

- **Training communication partners**
- Communication partners include:
 - Primary caregivers
 - Peers /siblings
 - Educational staff (e.g., teachers, paraeducators)
 - Professionals
 - And MORE!

Evidence-based Outcomes:

- Increases opportunity for student response when offered a choice (including books) by communication partner (McCarty & Light, in preparation)
- Provides a way to participate (adding hotspots, choosing motivating book/vocab/photo; Pope & Light, in preparation; Brittlebank & Light, in progress)
 - Opportunities to make choices about what activities to do, what vocabulary to add, etc. promotes autonomy for AAC users
- Increases child communication turns (Therrien & Light, 2016, 2018; Pope & Light, in preparation; Brittlebank & Light, in progress)
- Increases parent operational & strategic competency (Brittlebank & Light, in progress)





Key Take-aways

- Social interactions are foundational for development
 - Offering choices
 - Utilization of naturalistic interactive principles
 - Training communication partners
- Interactive shared reading is highly effective for promoting social inclusion, enhancing language development, and learning early literacy skills
- VSD-based AAC apps are useful for supporting interactive shared reading