



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**





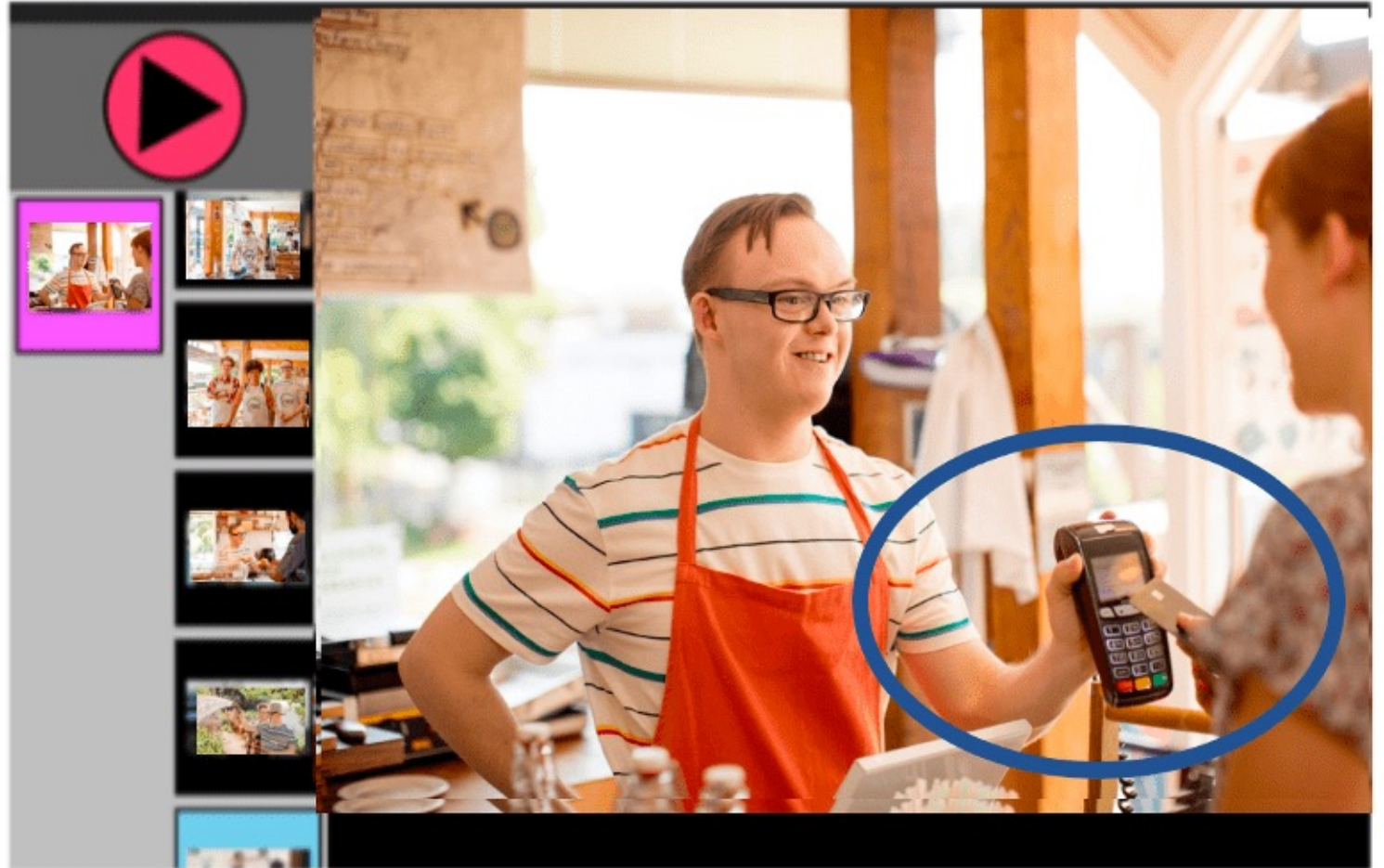
What does *interactive* shared reading entail?

- 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 woman and a young girl sitting together, looking at a book. The woman is on the left, smiling broadly, with her hand resting on her chin. The girl is on the right, also smiling, wearing a pink dress with colorful heart patterns. They are in a library or bookstore, with bookshelves visible in the background. The text "How can we support active participation for children with limited speech?" is overlaid on the left side of the image.

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

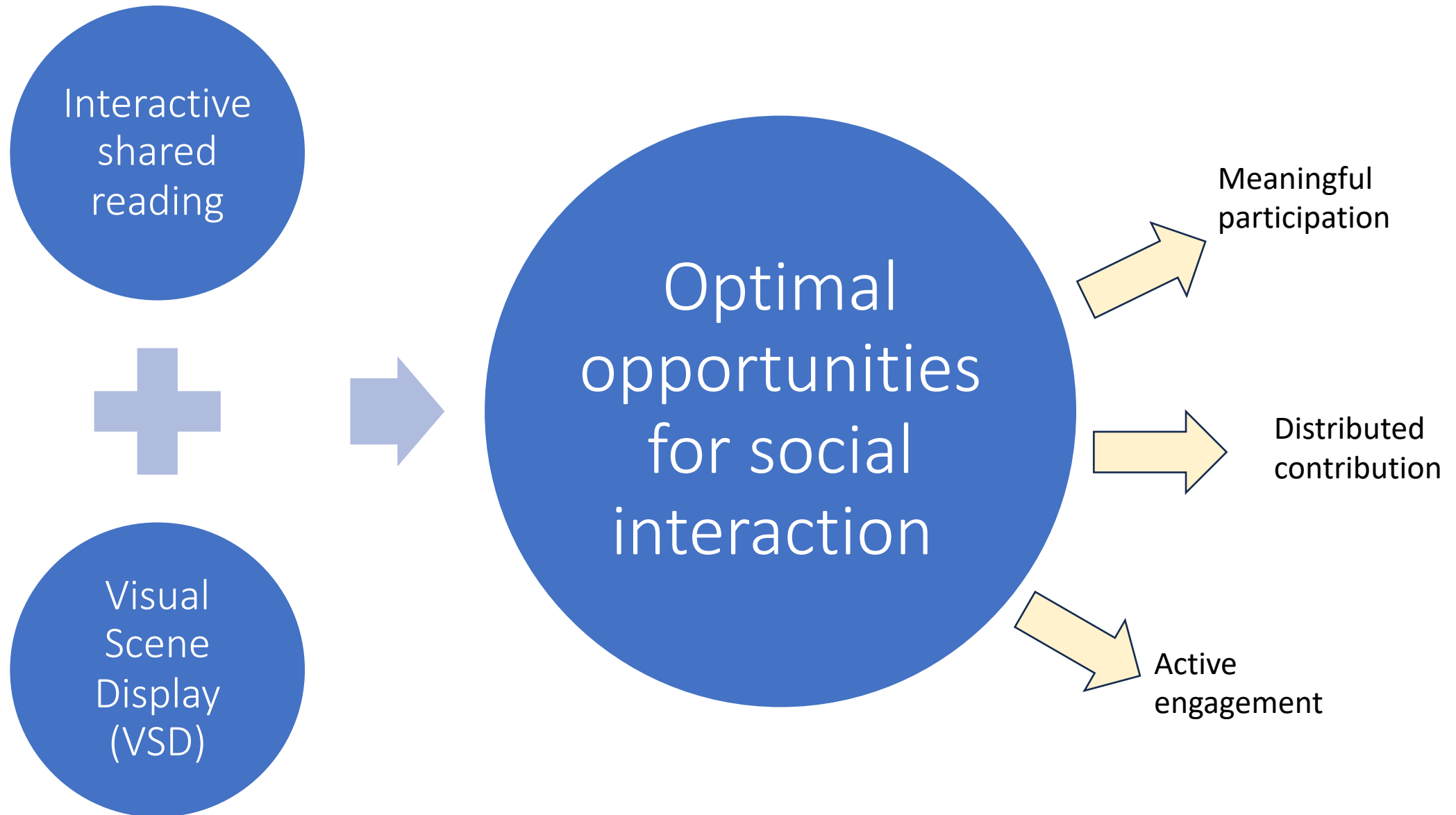


REPRESENT VOCABULARY
USING FAMILIAR DIGITAL
PHOTOGRAPHS



ALLOW VOCABULARY TO BE
ADDED IN THE MOMENT

Holyfield et al., 2019



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**

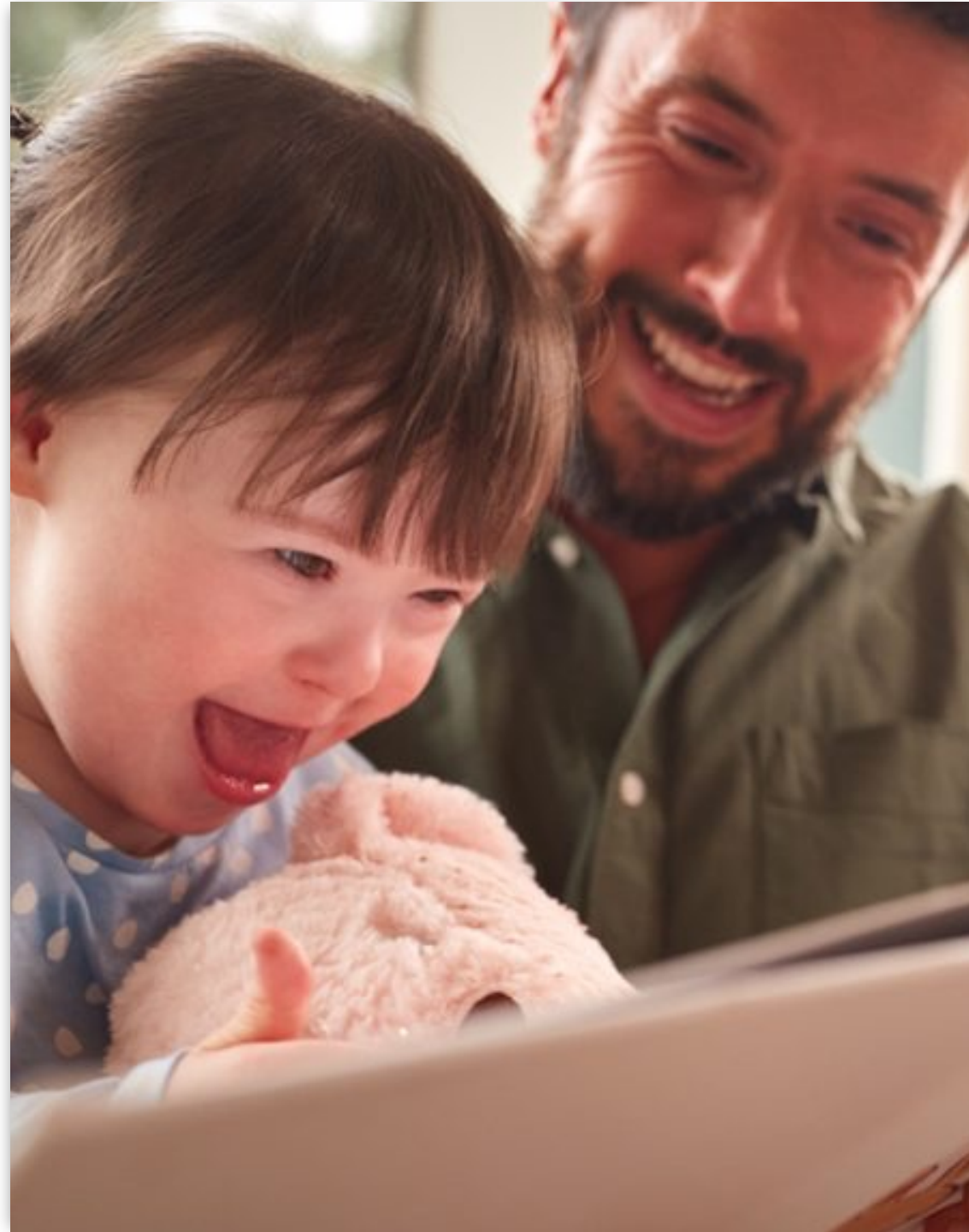
- Highly effective evidence-based strategy (Douglas et al., 2022; Akemoglu et al., 2019; Kent-Welsh & McNaughton, 2005)
- Communication partners can also be trained to incorporate naturalistic interaction strategies to support individuals with CCN, including modeling, expectant delay, commenting, providing 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