Communication Inventory for Emerging Language Learners

If a student is receiving services under IDEA, decisions about assessment and the student's plan must be made by the IEP team and must follow all applicable special education laws and regulations.

Determining appropriate instructional goals to increase social communication is one of the most important aspects of an educational program for a student with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). The *Communication Inventory for Emerging Language Learners* will assist educators in determining needs related to expanding the communication abilities of a student with ASD. Through the use of existing data and prior knowledge of the student, it is designed to identify priority areas for expansion of communication skills in an effective and efficient manner so instruction may begin immediately.

With Whom Should the Inventory be Used?

The *Inventory* is to be used with students who are considered to be beginning or emerging communicators. This can include those who are non-verbal, have limited verbal communication, have limited communication through an alternative modality, or those who demonstrate rudimentary skills and need to expand communication.

Who Should Implement the Inventory?

It is recommended the *Inventory* be completed by the student's IEP team. It is important to note at least someone on the team must have a basic understanding of the purpose and functions of communication. This team approach is required for completion of the *Inventory* to ensure accuracy and input from individuals who may see the student in different settings. It is important to note the team will be reviewing existing data and using prior knowledge of the student to complete the *Inventory*. Should further information be needed, the team will need to obtain consent from the parent/guardian prior to completing any assessments.

When Should the Inventory be Used?

Because the *Inventory* does not require the collection of new data, it can be completed informally and at any time. However, it is not designed to replace formal language and/or communication evaluations but rather is an organizational tool of knowledge the team already possesses about the student. It is not intended to be used for diagnostic purposes or to determine student eligibility for special education or related services. The *Inventory* is to be used throughout a student's educational career to guide communication programming. For some students, further information may need to be gathered through an evaluation that may include formal or informal assessment measures, including curriculum-based assessments, interviews, and/or data collection to develop appropriate IEP goals related to communication. Gathering new data to determine IEP goals is an evaluation and requires parent permission.

What is Reviewed in the Inventory?

The *Inventory* is designed to review functional communication skills. The *Inventory* begins with early skills and moves towards more complex communication. The skills included outline a progression of skills as a student expands communication. For example, skills such as requesting and following directions are critical early skills and contribute to the independence and success of the student in the school and other environments.

The skills included in the *Inventory* were based on the following resources:

- Kleiman, L. I. (2003). *The Functional Communication Profile – Revised: Assessing Communication Effectiveness in Clients with Developmental Delays*, LinguiSystems, Inc.: East Moline, IL.
- Mattes, L. J. (2006). *Functional Language Assessment and Intervention Sourcebook*, Academic Communication Associates: Oceanside, CA.

How Does the Team Complete the Inventory?

To gain an accurate picture of the student's abilities and needs, it is recommended both sections of the *Inventory* be completed. Each section contains an individualized set of directions. The *Inventory* can be completed by considering student communication in a classroom, home, and community setting. It is important to consider the student's skills across environments to ensure he/she can perform the skill effectively across settings.

To complete the *Inventory*, the team should think about observations they have had of the student in his/her typical environment(s). It may also be beneficial to review the results of previous formal and informal assessments, including those completed during eligibility as well as any previously collected data. **It is important to note no new data should be collected to complete this Inventory unless parent permission is obtained to do so.**

Instructions: Considering what the team already knows about the student, place an X in the box(es) that best describes the way the student currently accomplishes the task listed in the first column. If the student does not effectively use a modality to communicate, leave the box blank. It is possible for multiple boxes to be marked in each row as students may use more than one mode to communicate. The last column should be marked if the student uses undesired behaviors to accomplish the task, such as hitting, whining, screaming, crying, grabbing, biting, scratching, or running from the room, for example. Remember to only mark a skill if the student can perform it effectively AND independently.

THE STUDENT:	Uses gestures and/or point	Uses sign language	Uses AAC: pictures/ icons	Uses AAC: speech generating device	Uses verbalizations and/or word approximation	Uses spoken words	Uses sentences	Uses undesired behaviors
Chooses an item when presented with 2 items								
Chooses an item when presented with 3 or more items								
Asks for an object/action when it is being offered								
Asks for an object/action when it is being used by another person								
Asks for an object/action when it is in sight								
Asks for an object/action when asked, "What do you want?"								
Asks for an object/action when it is out of sight								
Asks for help								
Identifies an object/action when it's being used by another person								
Identifies an object/action when it is in sight								
Identifies an object/action when it is out of sight								
Greets or say good-bye to a person								
Gets a person's attention								
Stops an activity								
Asks to continue an activity								
Shows an item to a person								
Rejects an item or action								
*Asks for information								
*Answers "wh" questions in the environment								
*Answers "wh" questions about a story								
*Tells a familiar story								
*Comments or asks questions about someone else's story or information								

*Advanced skills -- prior skills will need to be taught before these skills can be addressed. ●●●●●●●●●●●●●●●●

Instructions: Considering what the team already knows about the student, place an X in the box if it describes how the student demonstrates the skill. If it does not, leave the box blank. Continue this process going across the top row, then proceed to the next skill. It is possible there will be multiple boxes marked in each row as these areas do not necessarily build upon each other. Notice there are three different colored areas, yellow, blue, and green. These areas are shaded to indicate completion of the task in the left hand column under different conditions. Remember to only mark a skill if the student can perform it effectively AND independently.

THE STUDENT:	When given verbal instructions	When given a model cue	When given a picture cue	When given written instruction	When presented 1:1 to the student	When presented in a small group	When presented in a large group	When instruction is part of a routine	When instruction is not part of a routine
Stops an activity when asked									
Attends to another person when asked									
Accepts an item									
Refuses an item									
Identifies items that are presented									
Obtains objects when requested that are visible									
Obtains objects when requested that are not visible									
Identifies actions									
Follows one step directions									
Follows two step directions									
Follows instructions containing spatial concepts (i.e., in, on, under, over, etc.)									
Follows instructions containing sequencing concepts (i.e. first, next, last, etc.)									
Listens while another person shows an item/ action									
Sits for ____ minutes while a story is being read aloud									

After the *Inventory* is complete, the team should consider the following questions:

1. Does the IEP team believe they have enough information from the Inventory to proceed to instruction?
   - If the team believes they have enough information, instructional strategies should be determined.
   - The team should consider developing communication goals for the student if needed.
   - The team should identify what additional resources may be needed and where to obtain them.
   - The team should ensure they have identified reinforcers or potential reinforcers for the student.

2. If the team believes further information is needed, how will that information be obtained?
   - The team should determine in which areas more information is needed.
   - The team should determine if assessment is needed and obtain required parent permissions.
   - The team should determine who will conduct the assessment and when the team will meet again to discuss results.

Information from the Inventory?

Once the team has completed the Inventory, priority areas for instruction should be determined. The skills listed generally move from early skills to more complex. Therefore, preference should be given to any skills the student cannot perform or cannot perform consistently that are listed earlier in the Inventory.

It is possible the team has made a decision to begin work with the student on a more basic mode of communication and will move to more sophisticated modes of communication as the student gains skills. For example, if a student is only using gestures and making few verbalizations, the team may not yet want to target using sentences but may instead focus on using words or word approximations for the moment.

Below are guidelines that may assist the team in using the Inventory results to identify priority areas. Priority areas are those areas identified from the Inventory that will be targeted for communication instruction. Review each of the following considerations. As the team reads through each of the following questions, look at the completed Inventory to determine whether the tasks in the Inventory should be chosen as priority areas.

1. The student engages in undesired behaviors in order to communicate instead of using the appropriate skill.
2. The student is missing critical skills and/or pre-requisite skills for other communication areas.
3. The student does not currently communicate the chosen emerging skill using any modality.
4. The student uses a modality for communicating the priority area but it is not effective for the student or is understood by a limited audience.
5. The student uses a single modality to communicate the area, but the team believes an additional modality would be beneficial for the student.
6. The team believes enhancing the chosen communication skill will increase the student's independence.
7. The team believes enhancing the chosen communication skill would lead to more meaningful participation in their environment.

Date Skills Were Chosen?

Priority Areas from Section I:	Priority Areas from Section II: