

Overview of Level VI



Abstract Symbols

In Level VI, behaviors are intentional, purposefully directed toward a communication partner, and have an intended meaning. Individuals at Level VI use abstract symbols such as speech, manual signs, brailled or printed words, or speech generating device to communicate. These symbols are abstract because they are NOT physically like what they represent. Children with severe orthopedic impairments may access symbols using a switch or AAC device by pointing, touching, eye gaze, etc.

Messages communicated at Level VI include:

- Refuse: Protest, Refuse or reject something
- Obtain: Request more of an action or object, Request a new object or action, Make choices, Request absent objects
- Social: Request attention, Show affection, Greet people, Offers things or shares, Directs someone's attention to something, Uses polite social forms
- Information: Answers yes and no questions, Asks questions, Names things/people, Makes Comments

Messages at Level VI are communicated through:

- Unconventional gestures and vocalizations continue to be used (body movements, facial expressions)
- Concrete symbols:
 - » Reject object symbol, photo or drawing, point to object symbol, photo or drawing, pantomime action or object, mimic sound of object, AAC device with concrete symbols

Partner

Goals for the Communication Partners

- » Increase the number of different abstract symbols (vocabulary) in the symbol mode that the learner currently uses.
- » Expand the use of abstract symbols to new contexts, partners, materials and settings.
- » Check for comprehension of symbols, and target a more abstract symbol if success has been demonstrated in the current mode. Target a less abstract symbol if the learner has failed to acquire the current mode.
- » Target a more conventional or more portable mode if this would encourage more responsiveness by communication partners.
- » Teach the combination of abstract symbols into two-and three-symbol utterances.

Individual

Goals for the Individual from Communication in Action

- » Communicate a message currently communicated using abstract symbols only in a specific activity/routine with a new communication partner or in a new activity.
- » Use abstract symbols to express intents currently communicated with behaviors, unconventional gestures, vocalizations, or concrete symbols.

- » Use _# of new abstract symbols intentionally.
- » Begin to communicate a particular message currently communicated through a single abstract symbol, using combined symbols (“juice” to “want” “juice”).

Level VI Examples: from Communication in Action

Goal 1: Student will use new abstract symbols to make choices, comments, ask/answer questions, label or request.

Goal 2: Student will combine 2 or 3 abstract symbols in familiar routines to make requests, comments, or ask questions (“pencil” “where?”)

Goal 3: Student will use abstract symbols to have a communication exchange with a peer.

Intervention Principles at Level VI

- Provide many opportunities to use symbols in motivating activities. Success is more likely to occur in highly preferred activities in meaningful contexts.
- Model combining abstract symbols into 2-3 symbol utterance.
- Remember to use speech and correct grammar when modeling with the individual’s mode of communication
- Be responsive to all communication intents.
- Individuals must have physical access to symbols throughout the day.

Communication Level	Continuing Strategies	Strategies to Introduce	Tools
Level 6 Abstract Symbolic Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Routines • Wait Time • Touch and Object Cues • Continue AT Consideration • Development of Symbolization • Tangible Symbols • Conceptual Grouping • Vocabulary (LEER) • Moving Toward Abstract • Transitioning from Object to Sign Language • Daily Calendars 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Abstract Symbols • Combining Abstract Symbols • Moving Toward Formal Symbolic Communication 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication Opportunities Data Sheet • Embedding Goals Into Routines • My Signal Dictionary • Communication Dictionary • Conceptual Grouping Chart

Essential Takeaways Level VI

- Individuals use abstract symbols intentionally and functionally and are beginning to combine known symbols as they transition to Level VII.
- Individuals will display splinter communication skills; often split by function or communicative intent.
- Expand symbol use across environments and partners.
- Symbols are the individual's "words" and must be accessible to him at all times. Speech generating devices (SGD) must be accessible and programmed.
- Label symbols. All communication partners must know what the symbol represents.
- Symbols must accommodate an individual's sensory needs. Pictures and line drawings may need to be highlighted; words may need to be enlarged or outlined.
- Provide opportunities during each routine throughout the day for communication practice across all intents.
- An individual's symbol use will range from abstract symbols to words/sign as he transitions to Level VII.