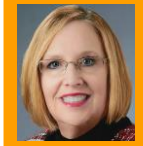
Re-Framing Minspeak

Gail M. Van Tatenhove, 2022 PRD Congress

Your past experiences with AAC, SGDs, and people using Minspeak® systems will frame your present opinion about Minspeak® systems today.

Natural Use of Pictures



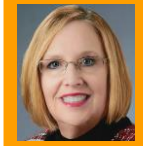
- Saw people of all ages and abilities using pictures to mean multiple things on manual communication boards. They were naturally tapping into the multiple meanings inherent in pictures.
- Recommended to provide intervention to get them to stabilize a **single meaning to a picture**, but …

EXAMPLES

- *Assigned Single Meaning:* ***drink***
- Primary iconicity = cup, straw, lid
- Secondary iconicity = beverage, drink, sip, swallow, thirsty, through

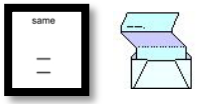
- *Assigned Single Meaning:* ***sleep***
- Primary iconicity = bed, pillow, mattress, sheets
- Secondary iconicity = furniture, bedroom, sleep, rest, dream, tired, on

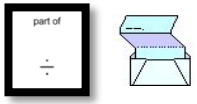
Vocabulary Extension Strategies



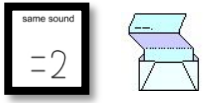
- Encouraged to maximize “primary” and “secondary” iconicity in a picture; and to teach children to use it to extend their vocabulary!
- Got training in Blissymbolics and the use of “Special Symbols” that were used to “extend” the meaning of a symbol beyond it’s current, assigned meaning.

What were vocabulary extension strategies?

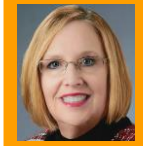
- Select a “SPECIAL SYMBOL” before the picture on the MCB
- The Communication Partner makes logical guesses, based on their linguistic knowledge and/or familiarity with the AAC user
  - “Same” + letter = mail, email, postcard 

  - “Part of” + letter = stamp, envelop 

  - “Opposite” + get = give, send 

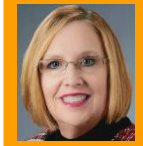
  - “Same sound” + letter = later 

Widely Embraced



- Was part of the AAC community in the 1980s and 1990s that was excited about Minspeak® as an innovative step forward for the field because it **systematically used secondary iconicity of pictures.**
- This excitement was evident at Minspeak Conferences held in the USA, starting in 1983.
- “Big names” in the field widely embraced and presented their work with Minspeak® systems.

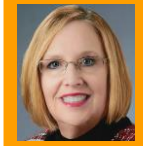
Cognitively Challenged



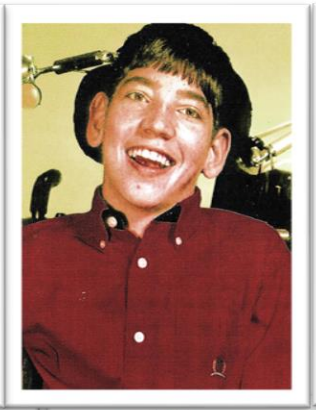
- Implemented custom-designed Minspeak® systems with children and adults with significant cognitive and physical disabilities.
- Their communication with Minspeak® exceeded everyone’s expectations.

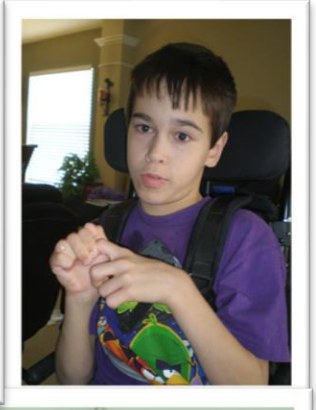
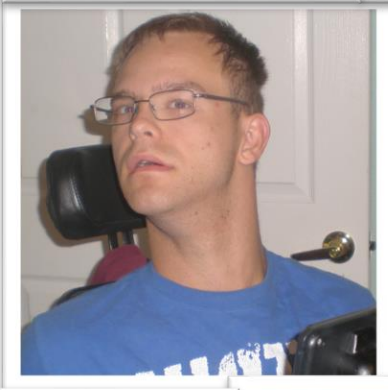
Cognitively Challenged People of All Ages and Abilities

Day-to-Day Client Success

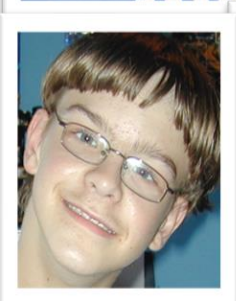


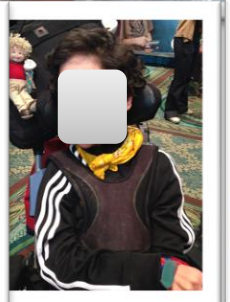
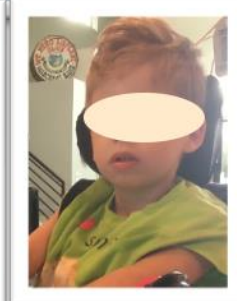
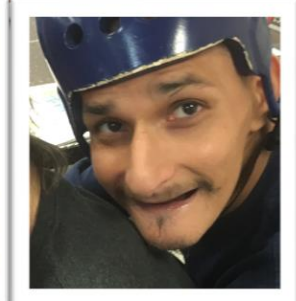
- Have been a SLP providing long-term, **direct services** for nearly 50 people who have used Minspeak® systems successfully.
- Their successes and affirmations from their families continually confirmed the power of Minspeak® as an effective communication strategy.

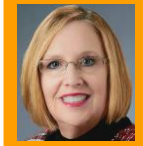








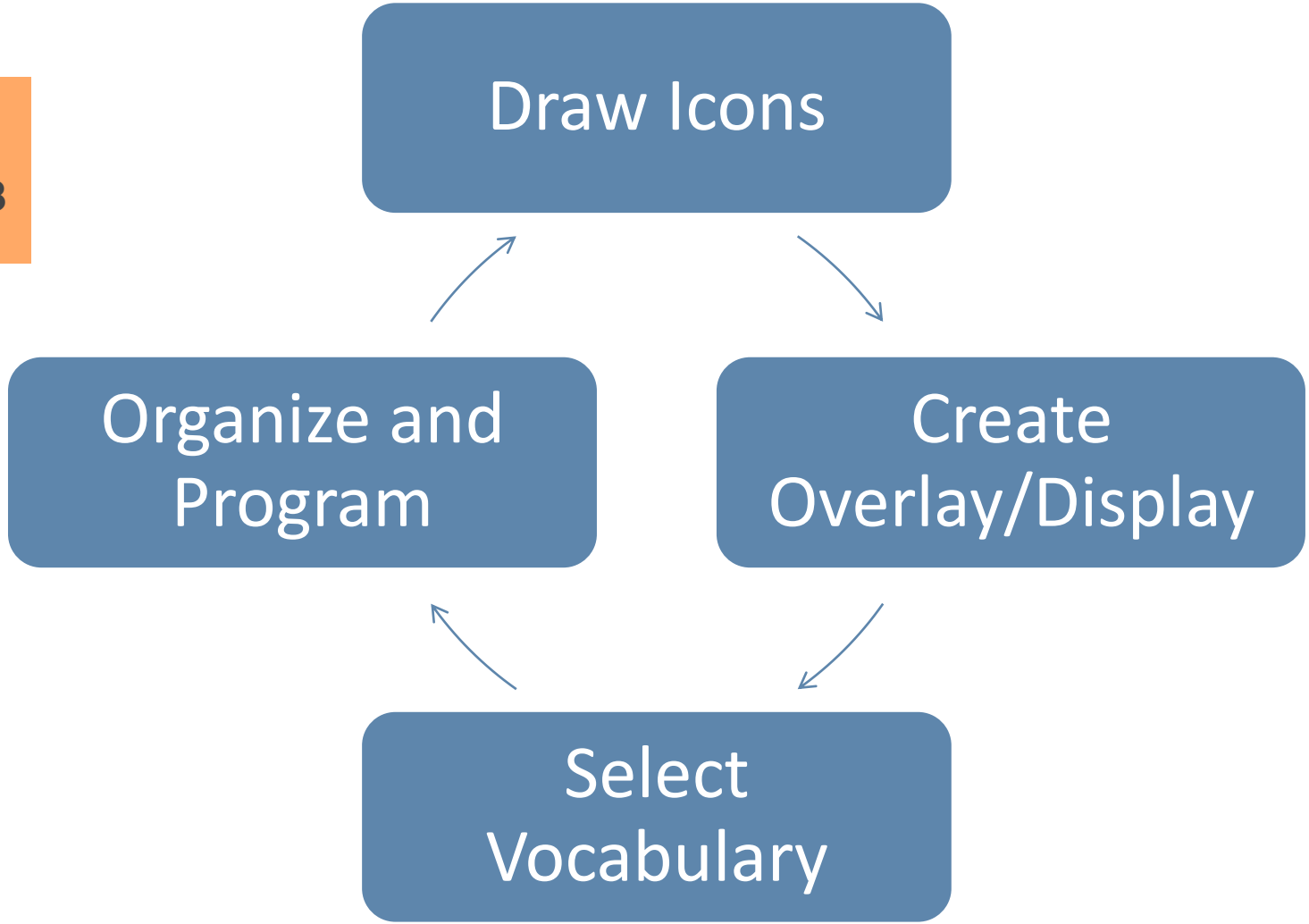






Evolve & Adapt



- Minspeak® systems are NOT without their challenges, but these challenges are not greater than the overall challenges of any other AAC system.
- Minspeak® systems and their applications evolve and adapt as [1]challenges are identified, [2]our experiences grow, and [3]technology changes!

Minspeak Before 1988



Lessons Learned

- Time Consuming
- High Level of Expertise
- Programming was often Disorganized, Non-Rule Driven, and Unpredictable
- People were Frustrated

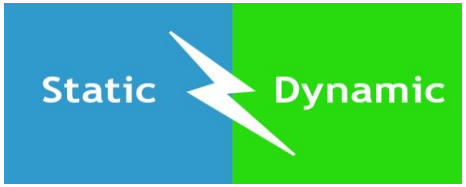
Minspeak® Application Programs (MAPs) were introduced in 1988

MAPs

- Wortstrategie
- Quasselkiste 60

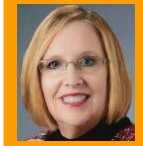
- Words Strategy
- Interaction, Education, & Play
- Power ‘n Play
- Language Learning and Living
- UNITY® & LAMP™ WFL
- Unidad®

Technological Changes Alter the “Look” of Minspeak



- PRC introduced devices with dynamic displays
  - Vanguard, then smaller Vantage – completely dynamic display
  - Pathfinder - hybrid with both a static paper overlay and a dynamic section

TODAY



- Minspeak® has 40 years of evidence to support it.
- Minspeak® systems continue to evolve while remaining true to the **fundamental principle** of multi-meaning symbols used in sequences.

- So today, let's ask ……

“

What’s in your frame when you think about Minspeak?

Not Immediately Intuitive

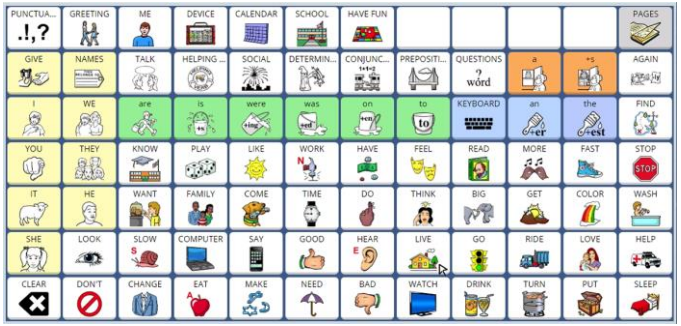
- I looked at a Minspeak® system once, but I couldn't figure it out. It just didn't make sense to me.

For Smart People Only!

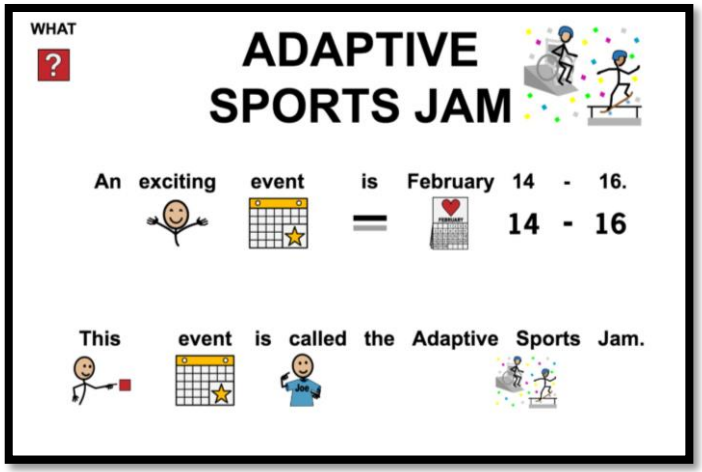
- I've only ever seen linguistically intact people using Minspeak® systems. It seems to be an AAC system for smart people only.

The Pictures

- I don't get these pictures! Why does that picture mean that?

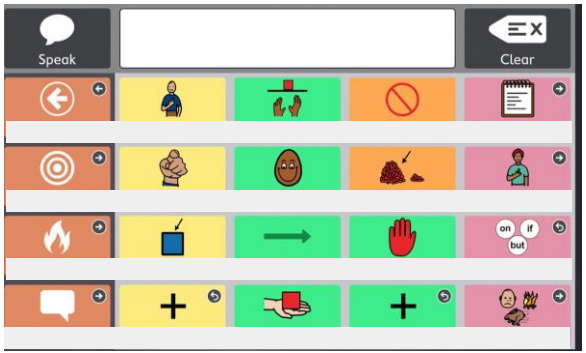


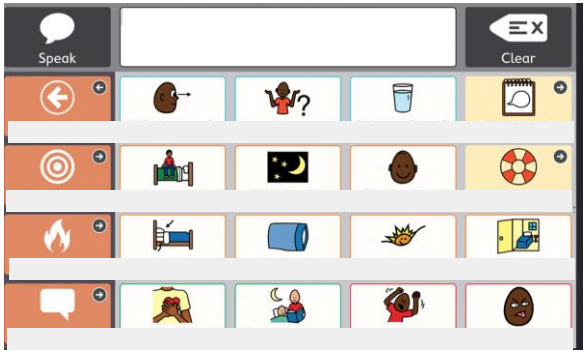
- These pictures don't match the pictures we use in our curriculum.

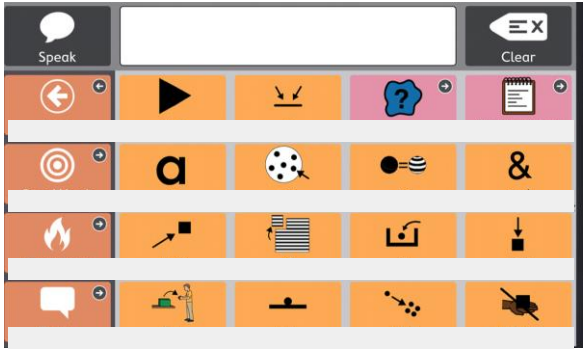


Takes Time to Learn

- Learning all these pictures and codes is going to take a long time. My person can talk right away with this other program.







TD Snap Core First with printed words whited out!

Too Hard to Support

- We have a lot of challenges getting buy-in from teachers and parents. A Minspeak® system is too hard to support.

Need Manual Boards

- My students have core boards and communication books. How would that work to have a manual board that goes with a Minspeak® system?

What’s Minspeak?

“

How do we want to re-frame Minspeak?

Minspeak Is …

- A language representation method that uses a small set of multiple-meaning symbols that are combined in short, rule-driven sequences.

Official 2022 Definition

1. Minspeak uses Symbols
(they are pictures!)

“

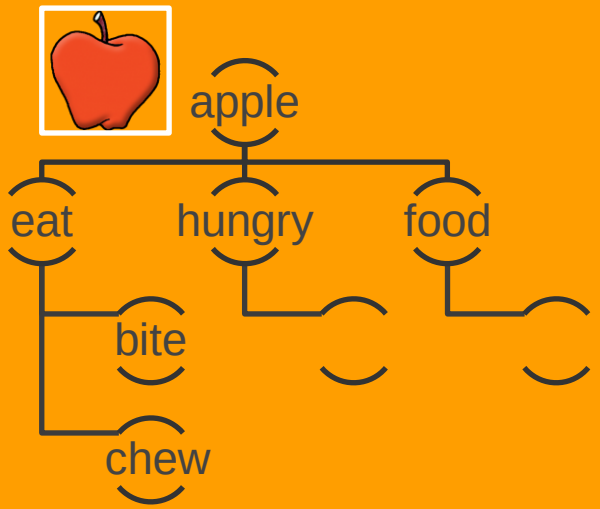
- *Pictures are used everywhere to communicate ideas, even with people who CAN read.*

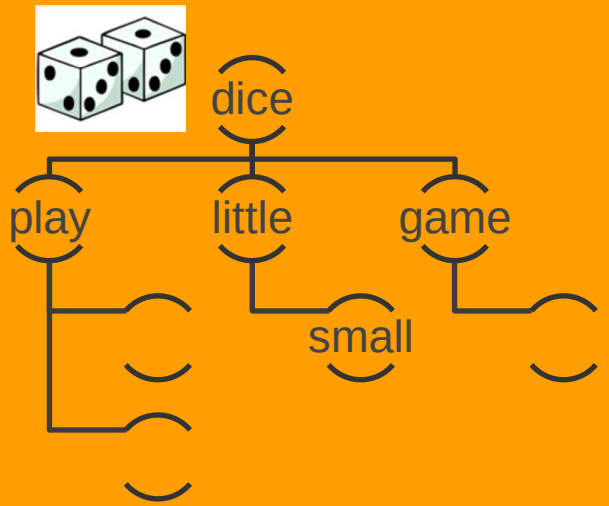
Pictures are Everywhere!

- Community signage
- Emojis
- Classroom & therapy materials

Okay. Minspeak symbols are JUST pictures.

2. Minspeak Symbols Have Multiple Meanings





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- *How “normal” is it to associate more than 1 idea or word with a picture?*

Research

- Mary Ann Romski & Rose Sevcik (1989). An analysis of visual-graphic symbol meanings for two nonspeaking adults with severe mental retardation, Augmentative and Alternative Communication, 5:2, 109-114.
- Joan Bruno & Henry Goehl (1991). Comparison of picture and word association performance in adults and preliterate children, Augmentative and Alternative Communication, 7:2, 70-79.

Romski & Sevcik

- … symbol overextension was defined as the use of a lexigram to represent a related referent for which there was no apparent available alternative lexigram (e.g., apple for knife).
- ….overextensions appear in the visual-graphic symbol use of adults with severe mental retardation just as they do in typical children, and children with specific language impairments.
- “Spoon” lexigram: SB designated it “ice cream,” “yogurt,” and “bowl,” in that order. **240 trials** were necessary for S. B. to attain criterion on Lexigram 20 (it means “spoon” and only spoon).

Bruno & Goehl

- 30 adults, 30 6-year-olds, and 30 4-year-olds
- ½ asked to make 5 associations with a picture and ½ asked to make 5 associations to a word

- There are no significant differences in picture versus word association performance for any of the age groups studied.
- Clinicians can reference the word association literature for information relative to children's picture association performance. **Kids do it all the time!**
- Functional and episodic associations are the strongest types of association, but all types are used.

My Response

- Why would I want to spend time trying to stabilize a single-meaning to a picture when children and adults naturally want to assign more than 1 meaning to a picture?
- Why not use Minspeak® to tap into this natural response to pictures?
  - by typically developing children
  - by children and adults with I/DD

“

- *How often, in page-based SGDs with single meaning pictures (e.g., non-Minspeak® systems) is a SMP used for 1 word on 1 page and then for another word on another page?*

In page-based systems with single-meaning pictures

Why does this happen?

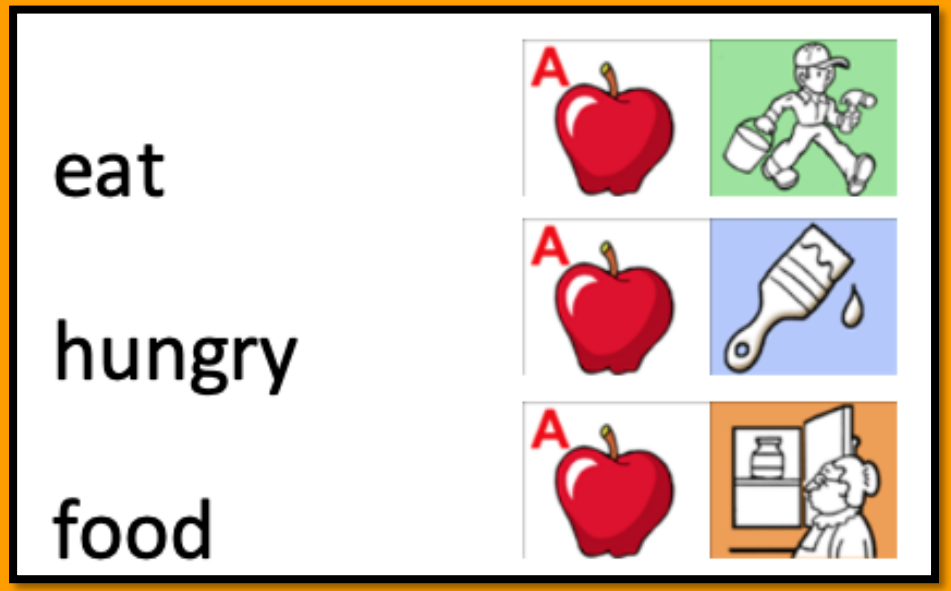
How often does it happen?

How do you deal with this when it happens?

What, if any, systematic rules are being applied to make it easier for the AAC user when this happens?

Okay. Associating multiple meanings with a picture is natural and happens in many SGDs, both Minspeak-based and those with SMPs. And in a Minspeak® system it is done ***systematically, with intention.***

3. Symbols are Combined in Short Sequences



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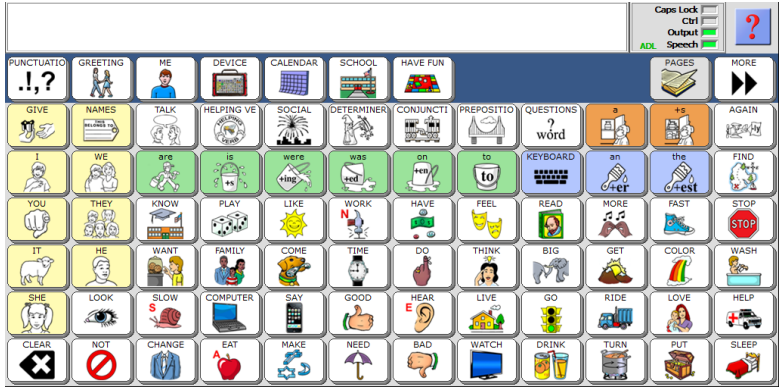
- *What’s the difference between SYMBOL SEQUENCING vs. PAGE-TO-PAGE NAVIGATION in SGDs with robust vocabulary?*

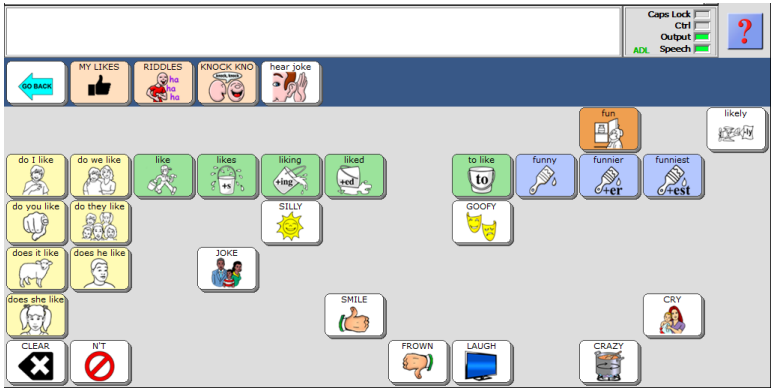
SEQUENCING VS. NAVIGATING

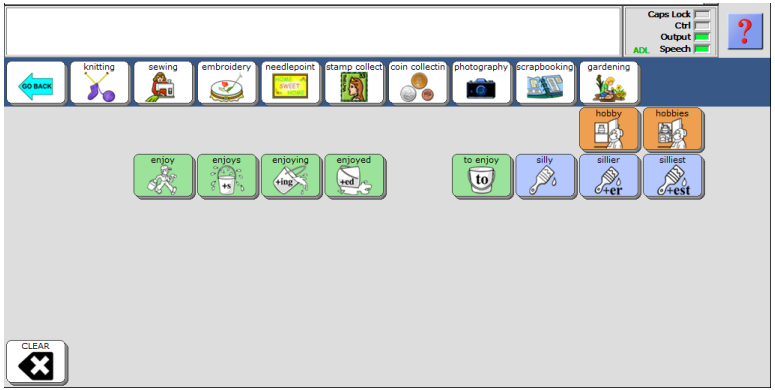
- Sequencing
  - Have to select 1, 2 or more symbols before the SGD speaks a word.
  - Each selection significantly REDUCES the number of available choices (reducing visual, motor, and cognitive demands).
- Navigating
  - Have to select 1, 2 or more pictures before the SGD speaks a word.
  - Screen changes do not significantly reduce the number of available choices. There are still significant visual, motor, and cognitive demands.

“silly”



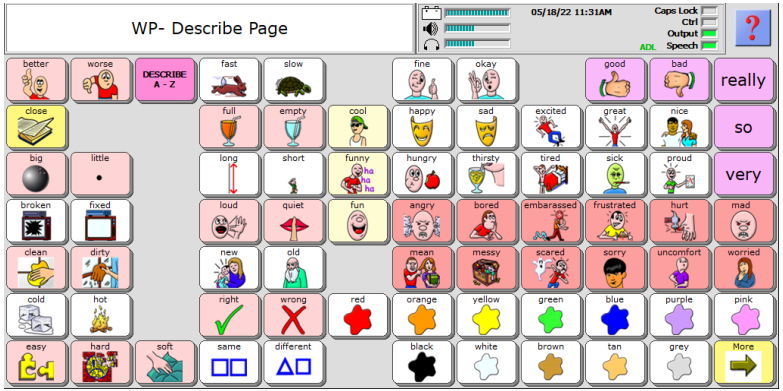
- 84 location Unity® Sequenced
  - Main Screen = 81 symbols
  - 2nd Symbol = 32 symbols left
  - 3rd Symbol = 21 symbols left

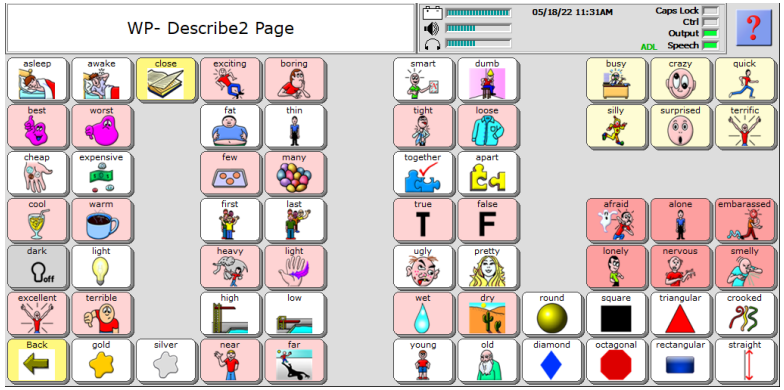




“silly”

- 84 location Picture Word Power
  - Main Screen = 84 pictures/words
  - Describe Page = 74 pictures
  - Describe2 Page = 64 pictures



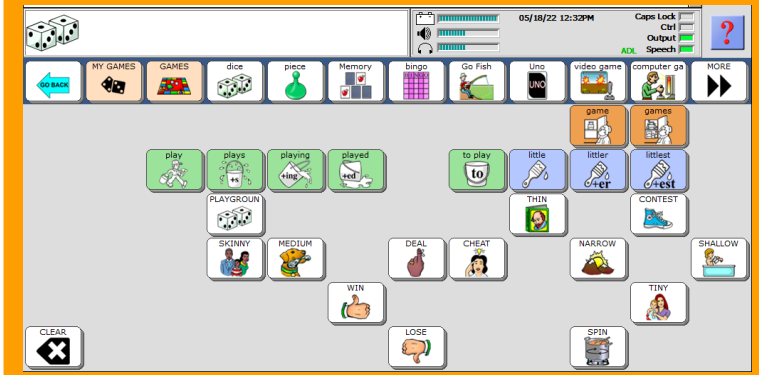


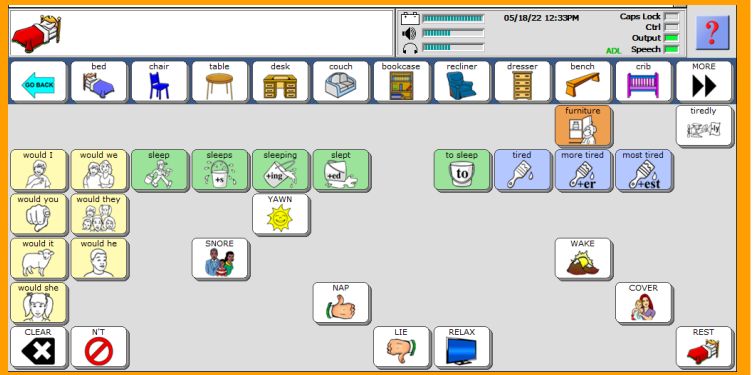
ORGANIZATION OF VOCABULARY

- Sequencing
  - **Semantic categories**
    - people, places, things
  - **Situational/Environmental categories**
    - games, school, cooking
  - **Grammatical categories**
    - open class (with consistent motor patterns for grammatical markers)
    - closed class
  - Alphabetical organization is possible in rows or on pages
- Navigating
  - **Semantic categories**
    - people, places, things
  - **Situational/Environmental categories**
    - games, school, cooking
  - **Grammatical categories**
    - main parts of speech (verb, adj, interrogative) with semi-consistent motor patterns for grammatical markers
    - other parts of speech often not in clean groups (conj, adverbs)
  - **Alphabetical organization**

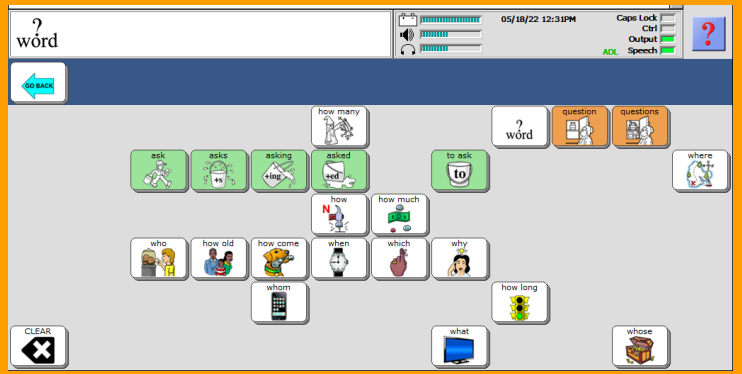
Okay. Sequencing is everywhere, even when it is called “navigating.” Plus, both ways of organizing and retrieving vocabulary require category & classification skills.

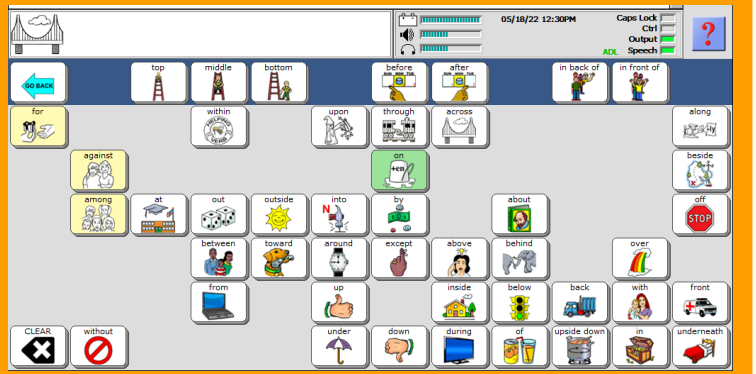
4. Symbol Sequences Follow Simple, Consistent, Rule-Driven Patterns (for open-class categories of words)





4. Symbol Sequences Follow Simple, Consistent, Rule-Driven Patterns (for closed-class categories of words)





You’re right. Clean categories of words & patterns make things predictable and this predictability makes it easier to learn!

Minspeak is no harder than any other robust, picture-based AAC system – in fact, I believe it is easier!

- *Talk to your PRD Consultant to learn more!*
- *Get your hands on a Minspeak® system and start talking with it!*

Thank You!

Gail M Van Tatenhove, PA, MS, CCC-SLP

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