Framework: Code (Language)

Code refers to the language that we use to express ideas. Words, phrases and sentences are chosen to describe simple concepts or complex ideas and the relationships formed between them. Detailed, specific information exchange requires sophisticated syntactic and semantic connected utterances that are heard, spoken, read or written.

Sound/Symbol, Word, Phrase, Sentence, Narrative/Expository Speech and Text, Dialogue

- Sounds and symbols are the building blocks that we use to code and communicate our messages to each other. There are different sound/symbol systems among different cultures. Within a culture there is most often an agreed upon standard system with subtle accepted regional differences in articulation for oral communication that are translated easily by any listener.

- Words are used to label and describe. They can carry multiple meanings and can convey various relationships with other words with regard to concept, feature, function, and category. The density of connections is important for processing, formulation and recall of connected speech and text.

- A phrase combines words to give additional information or definition. It can often provide clarity and context in an ambiguous sentence or stand-alone for purposes of identification. A phrase may also contain figurative language (idioms, metaphors, similes, irony) that conveys a meaning that is not literal.

- A sentence combines words and phrases to convey a complete thought. Its purpose may be to make a statement about an event or scene by combining an actor, an action, and an object. Questions may also be posed that query information about the context of an event. Wh- questions elicit pertinent aspects in a scene or situation. With more abstract vocabulary and greater syntactic complexity statements and queries become increasingly sophisticated and specific.

- Sentences may be combined to form connected speech or text. Narrative refers to scenarios or stories formulated by describing a sequence of events. These stories may be true or fabricated of realistic or fantasy events. Standard story structure is utilized. Expository speech or text connects related facts about a specific topic. A rich narrative repertoire is critical for learning, reading/writing, and academic success.

- Words, phrases and sentences can be combined for use in dialogue to carry a message being sent to another person. Semantic, syntactic, and pragmatic aspects of a message are incredibly variable and should be reciprocal. Context and purpose not only of the speaker but the listener must be considered. Local and cultural custom will constrain the language that is used. Acceptable dialogue skills are critical for lifelong success and survival.

Strategies for Activities, Lessons, and Materials:

- Identification of animal sounds is a fun way for children to begin to develop good listening skills. Animal puppets and stories encourage listening to and making a variety of animal sounds.

- Word relationships are strengthened when a variety of activities encompass the word in many different contexts and a variety of connected utterances. Provide instances of figurative speech for discussion of meanings that are not literal.

- Graphics in books and other materials should be colorful and clearly depict important aspects of each element in the picture. The illustration should clearly demonstrate any text that accompanies it.

- Manipulatives with good graphics provide good opportunity for recall, sequencing, and retelling.

- Good visual display is important with complexity that matches the child's visual skills. Props, puppets, mobiles, and pop-ups are a good extension of books providing opportunity for manipulation and movement.

- Nursery rhymes, songs, and fairytales are good choices for activities. They provide the redundancy in different settings with different people that enhances learning and recall. They are known throughout the culture and are often used in impromptu interactions.

- Books should be read and reread with opportunity for recall, discussion, and retelling of the narrative.

- Stories can be acted out with puppets and in dramatic play with props, costumes, and masks.

A person with autism or other developmental delay might:

- understand words and sentences but be unable to speak them.

- struggle to derive meaning from speech.

- repeat words, phrases and connected speech immediately after hearing it or at a later time (echolalia).

- use well articulated fluent speech but not in customary syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic contexts.

- use well articulated fluent speech in dialogue but with pronoun reversals.

- use well articulated fluent speech in dialogue but struggle to understand question forms and respond accordingly.

- have difficulty naming and describing feelings and emotions in themselves and others.

- recall words and connected speech with limited connections and little regard for meaning.

- recall words and connected speech in large chunks but have limited understanding of their constituent parts.

- have limited understanding of complex speech and text and much less than responses would suggest.

- have limited understanding of connected speech and text that is not literal (figurative language: idiom, metaphor, simile, irony).

- have limited understanding of spoken and written dialogue especially in narratives (books, novels).

- lack a robust repertoire of stories/scenarios whether personal, common(daily activities), or novel(books, fairytales).

- be preoccupied with sensory sensitivities.

- lack assumed skill levels in related areas.

User Friendly Strategies for Activities, Lessons, and Materials:

- Use manipulatives that separate out the various aspects of an event or scenario.

- Rely on visual displays and prompts rather than speech or text.

- Words and connected utterances should be simplified and limited to essential meaningful messages that correspond to the image being viewed.

- Use images and narrative that are reality based when possible.

- Lesson design should be errorless when possible.

- Name and emphasize any emotion and feeling that may be present.

- Use event aspects in numerous different types of activities that provide redundancy and encourage more varied and dense connections.

- Use folder tasks with velcro for manipulatives to reduce distracting aspects and allow independent work.

- Use task boxes for manipulatives to reduce distracting aspects and allow independent work.

- Use graphic novels with simple text and good graphics.

- Monitor text for instances of figurative speech and use graphics when possible to demonstrate meaning.

- Use technology to reduce distracting elements during a lesson.

- Observe and detect sensory sensitivities to materials and environment and alter as necessary.

- Observe carefully to detect competencies in order to know what they don't know.