Teaching Literacy Skills to AAC Users

(adapted from Janice Light)

Need to focus on:

- Appropriate instructional content (= ‘what’) 
- Appropriate instructional procedures (= ‘how’) 
- Adaptations for AAC

Content:

1. read interesting texts to student
2. build language skills
3. phonological awareness skills
   - phoneme segmentation
   - sound blending
4. letter-sound correspondences
5. early reading skills
   - single word decoding
   - decoding in context of shared reading
6. early writing skills
   - dictating/telling stories
   - writing stories
   - sound spelling

Procedures:

1. principles of effective instruction
   - model the skill
   - prompt
   - check the performance
2. meaningful literacy experiences

Literacy Instruction - First Steps:

1. segmenting initial sounds
2. blending sounds
3. letter-sound correspondences

+ reading interesting texts & developing language skills
Progression of Instruction:
- lower case letters first
- letters which are most frequently used
- dissimilar letters first – a m t s l f d r o g l h u c b n k v e w j p y
- short vowels before long vowels
- blends once most single letter-sound correspondences are mastered
- introduce letters incrementally
- select foils carefully to permit error analysis

Literacy Instruction – Next Steps:
- once student is competent with sound blending & knows ~6-7 letter-sound correspondences
  1. single word decoding (systematic foils enables error analysis)
  2. reading words in context (shared reading – adapted & personalized texts)
  3. continue letter-sound correspondences
  4. continue phonological awareness (segmenting & blending) to build automaticity)
+ reading interesting texts & developing language skills

Writing Instruction:
- provide interesting experiences = something to write about
- engage in meaningful writing activities
- provide access to writing tools – adapted writing materials, letters & sounds (AAC device), word banks

Writing Instruction – First Steps:
  1. read familiar stories
  2. build new story following the familiar story schema

Writing Instruction – Next Steps:
  1. expand writing experiences – photos, experiences, pictures
  2. support student writing stories