ANSWERING SIMPLE YES/NO QUESTIONS

The ability to reliably answer yes/no questions is obviously very useful. However, we need to be mindful of the type of yes/no question that we are posing, For example, "Have you had your snack?" and "Do you want your milk?" are both questions that request information. In taking a closer look at these questions, though, one question involves acceptance/rejection (Do you want milk?), possibly along with a visual tangible referent (milk), and the other question is linguistically more complex involving confirmation/denial (Have you had your snack?) and memory for a past event.

Yes/No Questions can be used for a variety of purposes, including:
- To request information (e.g., "Do you want to read a book?)
- To request a behavior (e.g., "Are you going to say hi?")
- To display or test knowledge (e.g., "Is Victoria the capital of B.C.?")
- Rhetorically (e.g., "Are you ready for lunch?" Lunch is going to be given anyway.)

For some students, the ability to comprehend and respond to simple yes/no questions that have meaning and personal impact for them is certainly possible. The types of questions these students most likely respond to include: "Do you want ____?" "Are you ____?" As well, tangible referents that accompany the question help the student to understand and respond to the question more accurately.

Here are some general guidelines that communication partners should be aware of when it comes to asking yes/no questions:

_ Establish a ready position with the student prior to asking the question.

_ Try to keep the number of questions asked to a minimum. Of course, responding to questions is an important use of language, but students with language delays tend to become bombarded with more questions than they can handle.

_ When you do ask the student a question, allow plenty of time for the student to respond. Most adults are impatient and find it difficult to allow 'dead air time' to go by without filling it up with more words! Be patient and pace yourself by silently counting to ten. If you get no response within that time period, then you can ask the question again or you may decide to just carry on with whatever you were doing and/or saying.

PROVINCIAL INCLUSION OUTREACH PROGRAM

_ If you are asking the student a yes/no question, attempt to make it of the type "Do you want ____?" or "Are you _____?"

_ Where possible, provide the student with additional contextual information paired with the question (i.e., show the student an object and ask "Do you want ___?").

_ Attempt to keep the dialogue just prior to the question brief so that the question stands out.

_ If you ask a question, <u>WAIT</u> for a response.

_ Respect and respond appropriately to the student's response. Avoid second-guessing their response or not honoring their response. Students do learn from consistent natural consequences.

- Avoid using questions to create a **monologue**. Instead, use questions to create a **dialogue**. If you are telling your student about something s/he has to do, avoid asking him/her a question for which you are <u>not</u> prepared to accept the response. For example, if it's time to go to the computer, don't ask the student if s/he wants to go to computer. Instead, inform, "It's time for computer."

In order to determine whether the student is in fact responding appropriately and consistently to yes/no questions, it is recommended that his/her team consider using the <u>Yes/No Questions Data Sheet</u> attached. By keeping a record of the type of question asked, frequency, and the student's responses, the team will be in a better position to determine whether or not the student's responses are reliable and accurate. You may discover that the responses are reliable and accurate only for certain types of questions. Thus some patterns may emerge, which the team may have previously been unaware.

This type of data keeping for a short period of time will also allow you to see how often you are asking the student yes/no questions. The team likely will find that they are in fact asking far more questions that might be predicted.

A word of caution
While the ability to answer yes/no questions is very useful, it tends to be relied upon as the primary method of communication (because it is quick and efficient). This tendency to rely almost solely on yes/no questions puts the student in a **respondent** role and does not allow them to become more of an **initiator** of communication interaction. The student quickly learns to wait for others to initiate communication, with the hope that they ask the right questions. They

become dependent on their communication partner to ask the right question, at the right time. This lack of being an initiator can also have impact on other areas of skill development, such as how the student is perceived by others, and performance in other areas of expressive communication. It is critical that other methods of communication, which allow for the student to become an initiator, are encouraged. Responding to yes/no questions should not be any student's primary method of communication, but is one of many methods that the student uses communicate.

Responding to yes/no questions is <u>not</u> the same as choice making. The tasks are very different. They can work together for some students, but not all students.

Observe and document how the student responds to yes/no questions. The student communicates "yes" by _____, and "no" by _____. Include this information about yes/no responses in the student's Personal Dictionary.

The following scripted routine is an example of a scripted routine that could be used to ask yes/no questions.

<u>Scripted Routine For Yes/No Questions</u>

- Facilitate a **<u>ready position</u>** (e.g., The student's head up and in a mid-line or neutral position).

- Establish the student's attention by calling his/her name and/or making eye contact.

- Say what you are going to do; "I'm going to ask you a question. Listen carefully".

- Ask the question.

- <u>Wait</u> and watch for a response.

- Give the student feedback about his response.

- Respond appropriately. This might involve doing or not doing whatever you asked about or caring on with the conversation.

YES/NO QUESTIONS
DATA SHEET

Record all "yes/no" questions asked of the student. Write the question the same way it was asked. Check whether the student responded "yes" or "no". If the student does not give a response, make a note under comment. If you ask the question again, list it on next line as 2nd, etc. time in sequence. Make sure to record modification(s) to the question, if any, when it is repeated.

Name: _____

The student responds "yes" by: **_____**

The student responds "no" by: **_____**

R E S P O N S E

DATE	QUESTION ASKED	YES	NO	COMMENTS