Interactive Core Board

Implement Core Words video with Melanie Derry, VCU-ACE

Welcome to the VCU ACE Interactive Core Board. At ACE, we know your time is valuable and want to provide quick real life examples of how to support language development by modeling core vocabulary throughout the day. Core vocabulary refers to a small but frequently used set of words that make up about 80% of our daily communication, primarily consisting of pronouns, verbs, adjectives, and prepositions. These are considered core vocabulary words because they're highly flexible and can be used across topics, environments, and communication partners. These highly versatile words are so important because they can be combined in many different ways to share information, to express needs and wants, to make comments, ask and answer questions, and so much more. Access to core vocabulary ultimately empowers learners to communicate independently and combine words creatively to share original thoughts. When you click on each button, you'll see video examples of real educators in Virginia schools using core vocabulary in a variety of ways.

We'd like to extend a huge thank you to our partnering school divisions. Those include Chesterfield County, Franklin County, Loudoun County, Lynchburg City, and Salem City.

How to Use this Interactive Core Board with Alicia Hart, VCU-ACE

Hi, I'm Alicia Hart, and I want to take a minute to show you why the interactive core board is such a helpful tool and how you can get the most out of it. For some learners, AAC is how they share their thoughts, needs, and ideas. But if you're the adult supporting them, AAC can feel unfamiliar at first. We've designed this activity to look and feel like an AAC device. The layout and the way you select words are modeled after the same tools some of our learners use every day. So as you explore, you're building your own confidence, comfort, and familiarity with AAC. We also know your time is limited, so we built this as a just in time support. It's something you can open right before you walk into the classroom or start a session and still have time to spare. When you select a word, you'll find three quick supports.

First, one or more classroom examples of that word being modeled or taught. Second, information on implementation so you know how the word fits into a learner's day. And third, how-to tips you can use right away. Everything takes a minute or less, and most of it takes about 30 seconds. That means you can pick a word, watch an example, grab a tip, and head straight in to try it. You don't need to learn every word at once. Start with

one, watch the example, learn some tips and try it out. So pick a word and let's get started.

How to Model Core Words with Susan Heck, VCU-ACE

The best news about core vocabulary and supporting language development in general is that the goal is simply to model. Model the use of these words during all daily activities, including play, meal times, instruction, daily routines, and casual conversation. We model vocabulary on the AAC systems, whether paper-based or screen-based by touching the icon or button that corresponds to the word we are saying. This builds a connection between touching the icon and the meaning of the word. And when we model, we never require a response from our students. AAC instruction is about language immersion and demonstration. We know that learning takes time. A student may need to see a word modeled 50 to 100 times before they ever use that word on their own. By modeling without pressure, we create a safe, immersive environment where communication can naturally take root. Every time you touch a symbol, you are building a bridge to a student's future independent voice.

Core Word: I

Classroom Example: Using ‘I’ in Context

Teacher: Write your name. I need you to write your name. Scissors.

Implement ‘I’ with Katie Thompson, VCU-ACE

I is a pronoun that serves as the voice of personal identity and self-advocacy. Using I allows our students to express thoughts, needs, and boundaries by communicating phrases like I want, I need, or I don't like.

How To Tip for ‘I’ with Katie Thompson, VCU-ACE

Don't forget to model the use of I for many different purposes to avoid getting stuck in requesting land. We use this pronoun daily for commenting. I love this. Sharing opinions, I think, and affirmation. I can do it.

Core Word: You

Classroom Example: Using ‘You’ in Context

Speaker 1 (00:00):

You. Do. You do. You do.

Speaker 2 (00:13):

Ready, Max? You do.

Speaker 3 (00:19):

Do.

Speaker 4 (00:20):

You.

Implement ‘You’ with Lauren Vetere, VCU-ACE

The pronoun you allows a student to initiate, direct, or comment on the actions of others. For example, you go, you help, you did it. This shifts the learner from a passive participant to an active director of their environment.

How To Tip for ‘You’ with Lauren Vetere, VCU-ACE

Modeling you is super easy. Simply observe your student and comment on the activities they engage in. For example, you built a tall tower. Oh, you are climbing so high.

Core Word: Go

Classroom Example 1: Communicating ‘Go’ for Car

Stop Ready Set Go!

Classroom Example 2: Communicating ‘Go’ for Spin

Go. You want to go? Go. Go. Stop. Do you want to go? Stop. Go. Stop. Good job telling me to stop. You want to stop? Do you want to go? Say go. Let me know when you want to stop. Go. Chris is going. Go, go, go, go. Chris, go. Chris, do you want to stop? Oh, there you go. You stop. You want to go again? What's that? Chris, you want to go? Good job, please go. Woo, go. Stop. Please stop.

Implement ‘Go’ with Carla Goodman, VCU-ACE

We use the verb go in so many different ways throughout the day to initiate transitions, explore new places, or signal readiness to start something. In our daily routines, we make statements like, "I want to go, go away," or, "Let's go." This word gives our students the autonomy to control next steps.

How To Tip for ‘Go’ with Carla Goodman, VCU-ACE

Go is an easy way to start when building core vocabulary in your classroom. We go to school, the lunchroom, and the bathroom. We also make things go during games and play. Sometimes we need others to go away and give us space. There are so many natural opportunities to model this word throughout the day.

Core Word: Stop

Classroom Example 1: Communicating ‘Stop’ Talking

Speaker 1 (00:00):

Yes. Good job, Anna, Sophia. Stop. Okay. That's fair. You're doing so good. You only have a couple pieces left. We'll keep going.

Classroom Example 2: Communicating ‘Stop’ Spinning

Go. You want to go? Go. Go. Stop. Do you want to go? Stop. Go. Stop. Good job telling me to stop. You want to stop? Do you want to go? Say go. Let me know when you want to stop. Go. Chris is going. Go, go, go, go. Chris, go. Chris, do you want to stop? Oh, there you go. You stop. You want to go again? What's that? Chris, you want to go? Good job, please go. Woo, go. Stop. Please stop.

Implement ‘Stop’ with Daniel Irwin, VCU-ACE

The verb stop is a powerful word that allows students to exercise control over their environment and express refusal. Using the word stop is foundational for self-advocacy to ensure personal safety and boundaries by communicating stop that or I want to stop.

How To Tip for ‘Stop’ with Daniel Irwin, VCU-ACE

Stop is a great counterpart to teach with go. Most of the time, once we get things going, we will naturally need them to stop. Remember to give your students opportunities to say, stop the swing, stop the music, or I want you to stop.

Core Word: Turn

Classroom Example 1: Communicating ‘Turn’ the page

Going to turn the page, go to. Yep. Good job. Actions. We're going to go to change actions and we're going to hit turn. We're going to turn the page. Good.

Classroom Example 2: Communicating your ‘turn

Your turn, Leland. Your turn, Leland. A crocodile. Hey, yeah. First one you turn over guys, you can't. Yep. It's an animal. It's not a food. It's an animal. Good job.

Implement ‘Turn’ with Crystal Hence, VCU-ACE

The core vocabulary word turn is a highly versatile verb with many functions. We use turn to direct action, turn it on or turn left to describe change, turning colors, and of course to navigate social dynamics and participation when using phrases like my turn or your turn.

How to Tip for ‘Turn’ with Crystal Hence, VCU-ACE

Turn is a great way to introduce the flexibility of language. Consider teaching turn while reading books to turn the page. When modeling social skills, I want to turn and for repositioning, turn it around. We can easily model turn in many ways throughout our day.

Core Word: Help

Classroom Example 1: Communicating ‘Help’ open

You would like help. Help. Okay. I can help you open it up. Here we go. How about blue? Blue one? Stop. Help. Help. Okay. I like your words. You said help. How about a red worm? Wow. Look at all those worms.

Classroom Example 2: Communicating ‘Help’ with toy

Speaker 1 (00:01):
Good job, Nila. You rolling out? Oh. Look at you. Oh, thank you so much. Do you need me to help? Do you need me to help? Okay. I'll help you. There you go. There you go.
Speaker 2 (00:30):
Are you feeling so much better? Yeah.
Speaker 1 (00:34):
Go Nila.
Speaker 2 (00:35):
Go.
Speaker 1 (00:36):
You're doing a great job rolling that.
Speaker 2 (00:45):
What are you
Speaker 1 (00:45):
Saying? What are you saying? Tell me. Nila, do you want help? Looks like you're having fun. Maybe no. What?

Implement ‘Help’ with Noel Woolard, VCU-ACE

The verb help is critical for self-advocacy because it gives students a direct way to request assistance when they're stuck. Teaching students to request help reduces frustration that occurs when they are waiting for somebody to notice them struggling. Asking for help and letting people know when help isn't needed gives students control of when and how they want the support of others.

How To Tip for ‘Help’ with Noel Woolard, VCU-ACE

We need to teach students how to ask for help before help is actually needed. By observing your student's behavior, you can recognize when they need assistance and

model. It looks like you need help with this math problem, or can I help you tie your shoe?

Core Word: Like

Classroom Example 1: Modeling ‘Like’ during play

All right, Anna Sophia, I want help. Let's do it. Ready? Push. Good job. You help. Help me. Let's make them go out. Let's make it go out. Ready? Help out. Yay. Anna Sophia, I like it when you play with me. That was so good. Good job.

Classroom Example 2: Practicing ‘Like’ during an activity

Speaker 1 (00:01):
Just us, right? Yeah. Here's what I learned. Oh yeah. Here's what I learned. Oh yeah. Here's what I learned with Ms. Marrone today. Here's what I learned. Oh yeah. Here's what I learned. Oh yeah. Here's what I learned with Ms. Marrone today. What did you like putting on? Nila, which one did you like putting on?
Speaker 2 (00:28):
Tomato and cheese. Tomato and cheese. No. That was very good. Thank you, Nila.

Implement ‘Like’ with Alicia Hart, VCU-ACE

Like is a great word for building autonomy and making social connections based on preferences. This core vocabulary word allows students to comment on their favorite things. I like this. Ask questions to learn more about others. Do you like it? And even express dislike with phrases such as I don't like it.

How To Tip for ‘Like’ with Alicia Hart, VCU-ACE

This is a perfect time to pull out some fringe vocabulary on your students' special interests, pair it with the communication support, and engage with them while discussing what they like. We can comment on the things they like and let them know what we like as well. I like trains. Oh, it looks like you like trains too. Like also opens up natural opportunities for modeling questions. What do you like?

Core Word: Not

Classroom Example 1: Modeling ‘Not’ in an activity

It is not. Food. Food. Food. It's animal. So it goes over here. Does everybody get it? Yeah. Okay. So everybody gets a turn. We're going to have all our food and all our animals. And we're going to start with you. You come up and you just take one and decide if it's a food or an animal. Okay? Food. Go ahead and put it on the food page. Good job.

Classroom Example 2: Modeling ‘Not’ during storytime

Speaker 1 (00:00):
I can't see. You see the word not today? Our story is called Not a Box. Not a box. A box. Not a box. A box. Here we go. I'm just listening. Yeah, not a box.
Speaker 2 (00:22):
Not
Speaker 1 (00:22):
A box. Two children everywhere sitting in cardboard boxes. Why are you sitting in a box? Box. It's not a box.
Speaker 2 (00:35):
It's a
Speaker 1 (00:36):
Race
Speaker 2 (00:38):
Car.
Speaker 1 (00:43):
What are you doing on the top of that
Speaker 2 (00:46):
Box?
Speaker 1 (00:51):
It's not a box. Why are you

Implement ‘Not’ with Melanie Derry, VCU-ACE

The core vocabulary word not is a powerhouse of a word. Beyond simple negation, it can be combined with many other words to serve different communicative purposes. Teach students to use not that or not me to refuse or reject. Teach protesting using phrases like not yet or not fair. Use not when sharing emotions like not okay. Teach

students to use not to direct others or correct a misunderstanding with phrases like not there or not that one.

How To Tip for ‘Not’ with Melanie Derry, VCU-ACE

A word of caution. It can be tempting to teach this word only as a directive with phrases like do not do that or it's not your turn, but not can also be a powerful commenting and self-advocacy core word. For example, I see you do not like those Brussels sprouts or those are not my shoes. Additionally, teaching not pairs well with teaching like. When we discover what our students like, we are likely to discover the things they do not like. Oh, you do not like to spin on the swing.

Core Word: Open

Classroom Example 1: Modeling ‘Open’ in an activity

Speaker 1 (00:01):
It's time to open. She's got to be assistant. To open.
Speaker 2 (00:20):
To open. To open.

Classroom Example 2: Communicating ‘Open’ during play

Look, Chris. Look Chris. Open. I'm going to open the box. Good job. Oh, look, Chris. Look at what's inside of the box. Where's this? Sheep. Good job. Look, now I'm going to close the box. Close. Open. Open. Open. Good job opening. Where's the pig? Can you get the pig? Good job. You found the pig. Hey Chris. Chris, can you close? Close. Good job saying close. Can you help me close it? Close. Close. Good job. Hey Chris. Chris, look. Chris, look. Open, open. You want to open? Look, open. We're going to open. What's in there? What's that? Elephant. Elephant. Look, Chris. Now we're going to close, close. There you go. I'll close. All done. Good job, Chris.

Implement ‘Open’ with Stefanie Paul, VCU-ACE

The verb open is a core vocabulary word that allows students to direct the action of others. By using a phrase like open it, students can request access to something. Students may also use this word when commenting such as it's open.

How To Tips for ‘Open’ with Stefanie Paul, VCU-ACE

Open is a great core word to target during mealtime and transitions with phrases like open the door or open my milk. We can also focus on this word during reading or other content areas as we open our laptops or books, or in a science lab as we open containers.

Core Word: Close

Classroom Example: Using ‘Close in context

Good job. Can you put the duck in there? Say bye-bye. Now we're going to close. Close. You want me to open? Open. Ooh, thank you for telling me to open. Let's open. What's in there? Nothing is in there. Okay. Hey Chris, look, should we close? Close. Good job saying close. Good job.

Implement ‘Close’ with Teresa Cogar, VCU-ACE

Teaching close is important not just as the antonym of open, but because it helps students ask for privacy and control in their environment. Students may request to close a window when it's too bright or a door when it's too noisy or they want time alone. We can also teach students to use close to signal they're finished with an activity like close lunchbox or close the book.

How To Tips for ‘Close’ with Teresa Cogar, VCU-ACE

A great time to work on clothes is while we are working on open. After we open the door to go outside, we typically need to close the door. After we open an item to put something inside, we then need to close it.

Core Word: On

Classroom Example: Modeling ‘On’ in an activity

Speaker 1 (00:01):
It's time to turn it. Turn it. Yes.
Speaker 2 (00:13):

Yes. We turned it.

Classroom Example: Modeling ‘On’ during singing

Singing: This old man, he played five,
He played knick knack on my hive.
With a knick knack, paddy whack,
Give a dog a bone.
This old man came rolling home.

This old man, he played six,
He played knick knack on my sticks.
With a knick knack, paddy whack,
Give a dog a bone.
This old man came rolling home.

Implement ‘On’ with Jenn McDonough, VCU-ACE

The core vocabulary word on is a powerful preposition that can be used to describe where something is. It's on the shelf. To tell someone where an object should go, put it on my desk or to request something to be turned on or put on.

How To Tips for ‘On’ with Jenn McDonough, VCU-ACE

A natural time to teach on in class is during arrival and dismissal. We put coats on or hang backpacks on the hook. When we enter a room, we also typically turn on a light.

Core Word: Off

Classroom Example: Modeling ‘Off’ in an activity

Speaker 1 (00:01):
Take them back off. Off. Yellow one comes off. Green one's off. Blue one's off. Now they're all off. Off.
Speaker 2 (00:15):
Do you want to put them on? On. What color should you do? Orange.
Speaker 3 (00:26):
Yeah. I think you might have to take the red one off to fit the orange one back on. On. Blue
Speaker 4 (00:36):

Goes first. Green, yellow's on. On. Orange is on. Red one's on. On. Hey. Good. Good job.

Classroom Example: Modeling 'Off' during singing

Speaker 1 (00:04):
Okay, we're going to do on and off. Christmas lights are flashing,
Speaker 2 (00:11):
Blinking
Speaker 1 (00:12):
Off. On, off, on, off. On, off, on, off. It's
Speaker 2 (00:20):
Time for singing.
Speaker 1 (00:24):
There's a light inside of me.
Speaker 3 (00:32):
Ready?
Speaker 1 (00:46):
There's a light inside of me just like on a Christmas tree. So glad you're doing on. There's a light inside of me just like on a Christmas tree. There's a light inside of me, just like on a Christmas tree. Yay.

Implement 'Off' with Susan Heck, VCU-ACE

Off is a core vocabulary word that empowers students to advocate for their needs and manage their environment. It allows them to direct sensory input with phrases like turn off the lights or music off. This word also supports self-advocacy through requesting the removal of uncomfortable items such as take off or shoes off.

How To Tips for 'Off' with Susan Heck, VCU-ACE

The core words on and off make a great pair to teach together. A student might turn the faucet on to wash their hands and turn it off again when finished. During independent work, they might put headphones on and take them off when it's time to listen to the teacher.

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