

# CONVERSATION BOOKS



## What is a "conversation book"?

A conversation book may be a book - or maybe it is just a personal artifact. A book could be just a folder, or it could be several pages long - it all depends on the child and the people in his/her environment. If it is a book, it has items taped or velcroed on the pages that are of interest to the child, and will attract the attention of a casual passer-by (e.g., another student). Sometimes all a child may need is a bright "sticky" attached to his/her wheelchair tray with a statement such as "Hi! It's my birthday today!" - along with a shiny balloon, or a birthday "crown" which emphasizes this fact. Or it may consist of a large "button" which declares "Yesterday the Ducks won the game". In short, we look for things that could lead to longer conversations with the child than "Hello".

## Why do we need this?

Many children who are deafblind also have additional challenging conditions that do not allow them to carry on a conversation - as we think of a "conversation" (words or signs going to and fro between people). But conversation is a give and take process. Often the child is only on the receiving end and does not actively participate because:

- He/she hasn't been given enough time to respond in his/her own way,
- The person addressing him/her has no idea of what responses to expect - or even if the child knows how to respond,
- The person addressing him/her has only limited things to say, says these, and then moves on: e.g. "Hello" is often the only thing a child gets!

A conversation STARTER book is a good way to engage a person passing by, as well as the child.

## Suggested materials for a conversation book.

Heavy cardstock folders - with two or more "pages"

Items with which to attach others - string (we made holes in the pages for this), shoelaces, various types of clothes pins (which we glued on to the pages with some strong glue).

Textures and objects - fabrics, mesh, feathers, buttons, shiny paper, etc.

Ziplock bags, or cosmetics bags - for items that are small (such as the buttons)

## Ideas for conversation starters??