Strategy: Peer Models/Visual Supports

I was working with a child that did not speak at all in class. No strategy that we tried was effective. Given the opportunity to use an iPad, I was excited to see if I could motivate her to TRY to take some kind of verbal turn with her peers in a small group situation. I picked 3 other students and introduced the app “Talking Tom”. This is a cute cat who will repeat exactly what you say back to you in his funny little voice! So the second they saw it, all of the children were completely engaged by the iPad and ALL of them wanted to have their turn as soon as they could.

At times when they were all talking, Tom could not hear them and/or his feedback was all garbled. This was a great opportunity to help them understand why they have to take “talking” turns and what it sounds like to their teacher when they all talk at the same time. So each child took a turn talking to Tom and they all laughed when Tom parroted their comments. When it came to the little girl’s turn, I gave her the iPad and said “Say Hi”. She struggled for a moment and then whispered “hi”. Tom did not hear her and so did nothing. I told her to say it in a louder voice so he could hear her. (Hoping she might but not thinking she would) and then out came a raspy, rough voiced “Hi”). I was so surprised but did not show it. Tom still did not hear her. “A bit louder,” I told her and then right at the iPad she yelled “Hi!” and he said “hi” back to her.

What a big smile she had on her face and all of the other children said, “Hey she can talk. She talked. I heard her voice.” After this the classroom team was able to support additional success and encourage her to talk again using the iPad. The iPad increased her confidence in other small/large group activities as well.

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