



## Communication Aids that Help Answer “What Did You Do at School Today?”

It's back to school for most of our kids and with it comes the uneasiness of not knowing what our special child did or accomplished during the day. Even the most verbal of kids have trouble with reliable answers to our relentless questioning! Using some low tech visual aids, even our children with limited verbal abilities can now answer the proverbial question, “what did you do at school today honey?” Here's how:

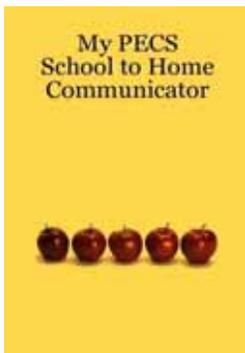
### Low Tech Home/School Communication Aids



**Sequencing devices** are great for sharing news between school and home, and helping your child initiate the conversation. These devices are accessible by most children, even those with the most physical limitations. The child hits the big button to play a pre-recorded message from school or home. Sequences can be set up by you or classroom staff so your child can tell a story, have a conversation or take turns playing a game. (The Step by Step is available from [www.Ablenet.com](http://www.Ablenet.com) ).



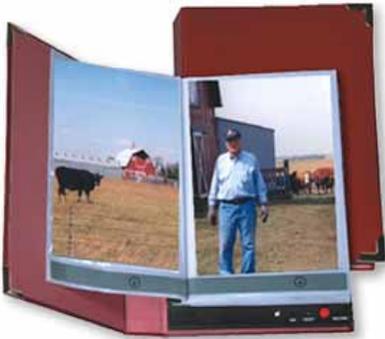
A simple Talking Card can be enhanced to become a **Weekend News Communicator**. Press the button to record a message about an activity your child did at home or school, and let your child press the Play button to share the news with classmates at morning meeting or circle! I've added a topic board to further guide the “conversation.”



If you or your teachers have Boardmaker™, you can create **home/school communication journals** customized to your child's school day. Pre-made forms make it easy to communicate about your child on a daily basis. Parent Laura Behrendt has published *My PECS School to Home Communicator*, a book designed to facilitate daily communication. It includes pre-made pages with picture symbols to communicate with your child's teacher about classes, lunch, homework, mood, things needed at school and general comments. (\$29 from [www.autismshopper.com](http://www.autismshopper.com).)



For more ideas on home/school communication, consider joining the Boardmaker listserv at Yahoo! Groups ([www.groups.yahoo.com/boardmaker/](http://www.groups.yahoo.com/boardmaker/)) and browse the archives for sample journal/communication boards that parents, teachers and therapists have created.



**Talking Photo Albums** make an inexpensive and versatile communication aid. Your child can share news about classroom activities, field trips or family vacations by pressing a button to play a pre-recorded message. Simply slide 4"x6" photos into the album pages and record a brief message narrating the picture. All kids love to see pictures of themselves and sharing the photos is a great motivator to socialize and communicate! Talking Photo Albums can also be used for teaching, social stories and more.



Related to going to school, would you like make it easier to get the kids ready for school in the morning? Try creating a **visual task schedule** using Choiceworks or Boardmaker. Choiceworks visual support system includes illustrated magnets for teaching the steps of washing, brushing, etc. (and other home routines) complete with choice of reward for achieving the desired result – getting ready more independently!

For more information about using augmentative communication aids and practical visual supports like these, see [www.SayitwithSymbols.com](http://www.SayitwithSymbols.com). The Learn Section offers a comprehensive listing of support groups, websites, catalogs, suppliers and more to help our kids communicate with symbols and visuals.