

AAC & MULTIPLE DISABILITIES:

A PRC SUCCESS STORY

Meet Maddie

Affectionate and outgoing, fifteen-year-old Maddie Chan lives life enthusiastically



despite microcephaly and cerebral palsy. She is communicating to her highest potential with her PRC SpringBoard™ Lite, using it to express her feelings, communicate her

physical needs, interact socially with others, and share her sense of humor.

Maddie's Challenges:

Not being able to speak is Maddie's major challenge. She also has cortical visual impairment and small motor skill deficiencies. She is severely apraxic and has mild to moderate cognitive disability. Attention needs to be given to her physical state in order to ensure she is ready to learn.

Maddie's Strengths:

Despite her limited verbal skills, Maddie loves being around people and interacting with them. She is ambulatory and very social. Her interest in other people and the enjoyment she gets from commenting on things and making jokes motivate her to use her AAC device.

PRC Device:

Maddie uses a PRC SpringBoard Lite. Its lightweight and portable design makes it possible for Maddie to carry it with her wherever she goes.

Vocabulary:

Maddie uses core vocabulary and has successfully progressed from 15-locations to 32-locations, indicating excellent progress from both the motor and visual perspectives. The Activity Row and Visual Scenes are used to provide access to additional vocabulary.

Access Method:

Maddie uses a keyguard to access her device by direct selection.

Communication Before SpringBoard Lite:

Maddie communicated nonverbally with gestures, such as swinging her arms towards things that she wanted. She vocalized loudly to request attention and could approximate "yes" and "dat."

Therapy Strategies:

Speech-language pathologist Sarah Hales ensures that Maddie's sensory needs are met prior to beginning therapy sessions, using bouncing, deep pressure, and a Sit-Fit cushion as aids. Because Maddie is motivated by books, Sarah uses them to teach core vocabulary, which is then reinforced through other activities.

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Maddie uses her SpringBoard Lite to share information about herself, her family, and her favorite things.

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SpringBoard Lite is one of several AAC devices from PRC enabling those who can't speak to achieve real communication.



Communication Now:

Using her SpringBoard Lite, Maddie spontaneously communicates in single words, and will sometimes use two-word and, less frequently, three-word phrases. She also uses her device to share information about herself, her family, and her favorite things, and to tell her caregivers when she needs something, such as, “need drink,”



“need food,” or “want snack.” She says “my turn” and “your turn” on her device when she is playing a game. This basic emergent communication is all done with core vocabulary, which Maddie uses very well.

How PRC’s SpringBoard Lite has Changed Maddie’s Life:

“Having a SpringBoard Lite has absolutely improved Maddie’s quality of life,” says Sarah. “It has increased her ability to interact socially, which is hugely important to her, and to let people know when she needs help.”

One of Maddie’s former teachers, Amy Conover, notes, “I knew in the first few weeks after meeting Maddie that she understood everything I said to her. Everything! Her receptive vocabulary is huge. SpringBoard Lite has become Maddie’s voice. She is never going to be able to communicate with spoken words, so it is her way of actively participating in the world and enjoying life.”

“From the beginning, I was concerned about what Maddie’s disabilities would mean for the rest of her life, and felt not being able to communicate was by far her greatest challenge,” says Maddie’s mother, Patty Chan. “Maddie is so much happier when she can tell us things, which in turn makes all of us happier. Life at home is more peaceful now that Maddie has fewer episodes of frustration. And having the device changes the way other people interact with her – she’s highly social, but being nonverbal was a big obstacle.”

To read a more in-depth report on Maddie Chan and others overcoming their communication challenges using AAC devices from PRC, visit prentrom.com.