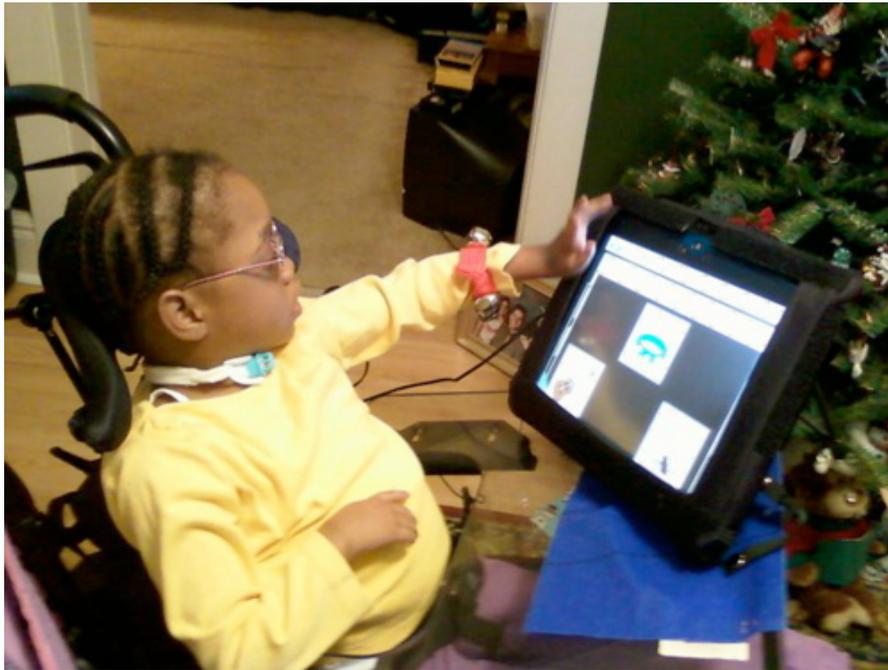


# Complex Child E-Magazine

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## Mary's DynaVox by Chaney Roko

Using a DynaVox VMax dynamic communication device is how my daughter, Mary, is most effective in her communication. Mary can tell me how she is feeling, when she needs to be cleaned, when she needs suctioning from her trach, and when she wants to get out of her wheelchair. Activating the DynaVox VMax is how Mary first learned to play with her stuffed horse and told me *yes* or *no* to my name suggestions and finally named him Spotty. Many words to help Mary pretend were added to her horse play page!



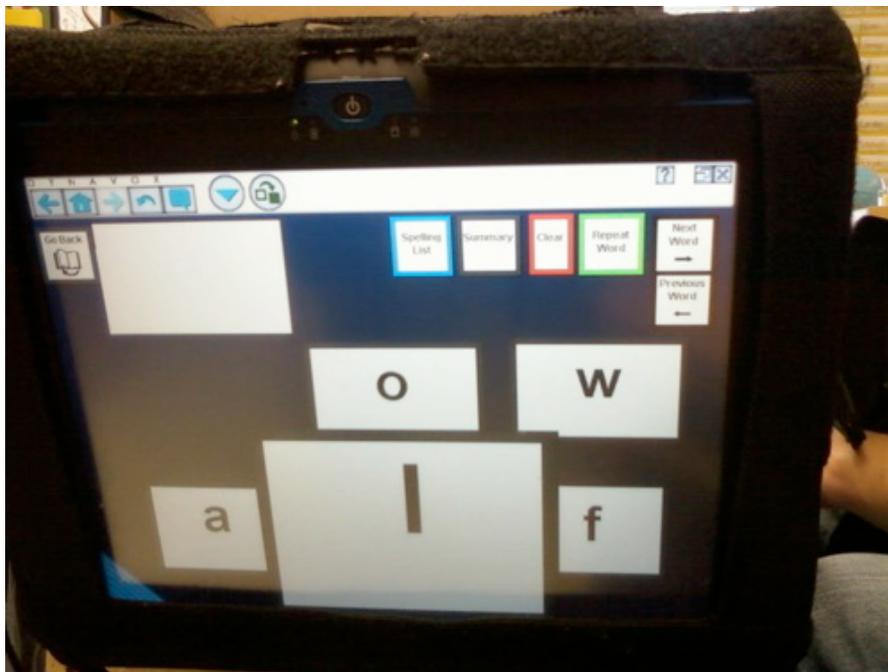
Mary using her DynaVox

Mary has limited communication without her DynaVox. She has a tracheostomy and is non-ambulatory. Mary has Arthrogyriposis Multiplex Congenita and her fingers do not bend. She uses a sign that she made up with her right arm to signal a caregiver that she wants to be suctioned. She has a very expressive face to get her emotions across. With a facial expression and arm motion, Mary can also indicate *yes* and *no* when she is highly motivated. Without her DynaVox, Mary has cried on several occasions until someone has guessed what was bothering her. It is very frustrating when a person cannot communicate.

We chose the DynaVox VMax for Mary because it has a larger touch screen. A large screen is beneficial since you can see it better, and when she is able to touch the icons, they are larger targets. At this time, she uses it with a switch. Her device was also chosen for her because she uses a wheelchair and this device can be mounted to the chair with a ConnectIt Mount.

Mary uses the DynaVox with a scanning method. The icons on the screen are scanned at a pre-set speed. Using a pillow speaker, Mary hears the choices of what she can say. She touches a switch with her elbow when it scans the one she wants. In addition, there is an icon on each page that is a “close” button or a button that opens a new window to a new page. The opportunity for building new pages and new vocabulary is limitless.

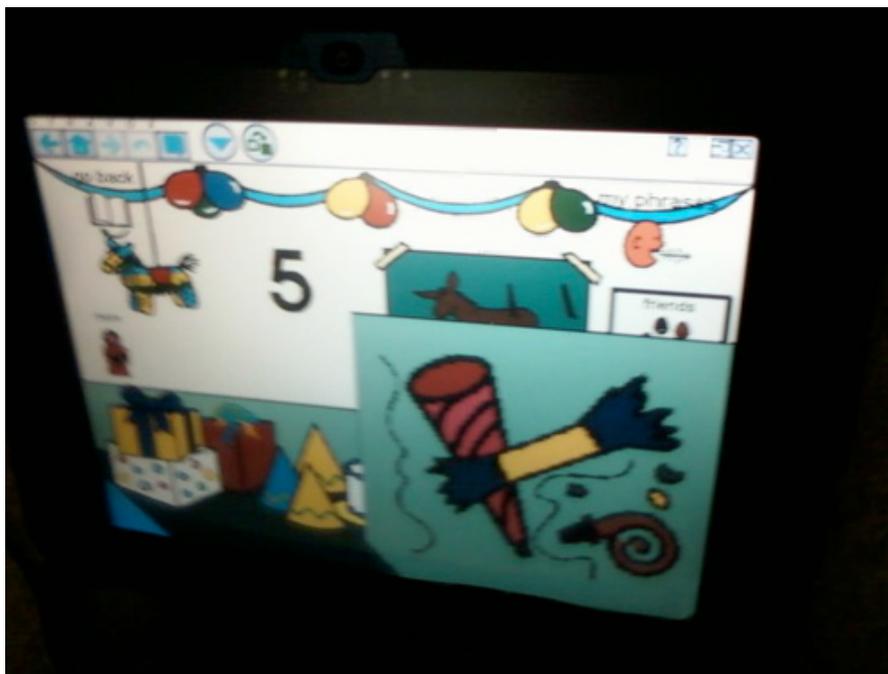
Mary uses a Joggle Switch while the device scans through the choices. She activates it with her elbow. Others activate switches with knees, hands, heads, or use a twitch switch to activate it with smaller muscles. Eye gaze is a high tech way of using the device. An eye gaze system is connected to the device and the user collaborates her eyes with it by focusing on various parts of the screen. To use eye gaze, you must have good head control or a stationary head and good eye focus.



A spelling game on Mary's DynaVox

There are several other ways of activating the devices. The most obvious way is called Direct Select or Touch Enter. That is when you touch the icon with your hand and it speaks. The user can also use touch exit, a mouse or joystick to activate the device. A head mouse or head tracker can be used by someone who has good head control. These accessories attach to the top of a device and the user wears a reflective piece on her head, hat, or barrette. The reflective piece acts as the mouse on the device, and selection is made when it pauses on an icon.

Besides the voice-output benefit of communication, dynamic communication systems have other benefits. For example, Mary's DynaVox is operated on a Windows program. Most devices come with Windows software, including Microsoft Word, Windows Media Center, and Internet Explorer. If the user does not wish to open up these parts of the device (due to warranty or insurance reasons) the user can access a normal operating computer through most devices if necessary. By using some of the accessories provided through DynaVox, Mary can use any computer program on any computer. The AccessIt or AccessIt Bluetooth are both tools that will allow a user to give commands to a computer through the DynaVox. Another advantage to dynamic devices is the infrared capabilities to use any device with a remote without installing accessories. A user can control a TV, DVD player, telephone, and some toys once the device learns the correct infrared signals.



A picture scene on Mary's DynaVox

DynaVox has representatives in various parts of the country to assist people in choosing the best device and in programming, troubleshooting and training. The DynaVox website is very active with online trainings and representatives to answer email questions. Trainings are free for users, family members, teachers, therapists, and anyone who is interested in learning more about DynaVox.

Mary's DynaVox has opened up a new world for her!

*Please visit Chaney's blog at <http://chaneyml.blogspot.com/> to learn more about Mary and her device. For more information on Arthrogryposis Multiplex Congenita, see <http://www.amcsupport.org/>.*