

A True FAAST Fan

by Judith Schiavo, M.S., CCC-SLP

When we were first introduced to four year old Eli in 2006, he was just beginning to access the adaptive toys and communication devices made available through the Florida Alliance for Assistive Services and Technology (FAAST) Central Regional Center Toy Library in Tampa. Eli had initially been diagnosed with severe developmental delay and cortical blindness. His trunk and motor control had been severely affected. At that time, the first device chosen for his use was a “Talking Bubble,” a bright blue dome shaped toy with a diameter of approximately 10 inches. The four brightly colored buttons and two suspended wooden balls conveniently spaced on the bubble allow Eli to provide and imitate short prerecorded responses to select desired foods, objects, or actions.



Eli recently celebrated his seventh birthday and now owns his own “Talking Bubble,” which he continues to use in therapy sessions, as well as at school. With simple changes of the recorded messages on this device, he can select and verbally approximate food and drink choices, identify feeling words such as hot, cold, hungry and thirsty, and respond to questions.



Since his initial introduction to the FAAST Central Toy Library, Eli has experimented with a variety of toys, switches and communication devices to help expand his receptive and expressive abilities. The “Busy Box” pictured here allows Eli to access multimodal activities including glittering revolving colors, light, sound, music, and a fan. The five target areas also afford him the opportunity to practice the fine motor skill of selecting the correct button and location for each specific activity. Since Eli loves to sing, he particularly enjoys the buttons which produce the “beep” and the “It’s a Small World” tune, which he can imitate with perfect pitch.

In addition to the teaching concepts offered by adaptive toys, Eli also enjoys their cause and effect capabilities. One of his favorites is a “Shrek” toy, which speaks a variety of phrases taken from the “Shrek” movie in the actual character’s voice when Eli activates it with a specific button or switch. With his expanding verbal ability, he is now progressing to imitation of multisyllable words and two word phrases and requesting a greater variety of play activities.



Wherever he goes, Eli continues to brighten the lives of family, friends, therapists, medical professionals, school staff, and new friends that he meets. His therapists enjoy sharing pride in his accomplishments and are very proud that he is now beginning to identify Ms. Judy, Ms. Laura, and Ms. Suzie by name, thanks to the ongoing support of his family and the adapted toys from the FAAST Central Regional Library.