

New worlds of communication

When Delaware schools went remote as a coronavirus precaution, many students with complex communication needs couldn't access existing video- and text-based schoolwork and services.

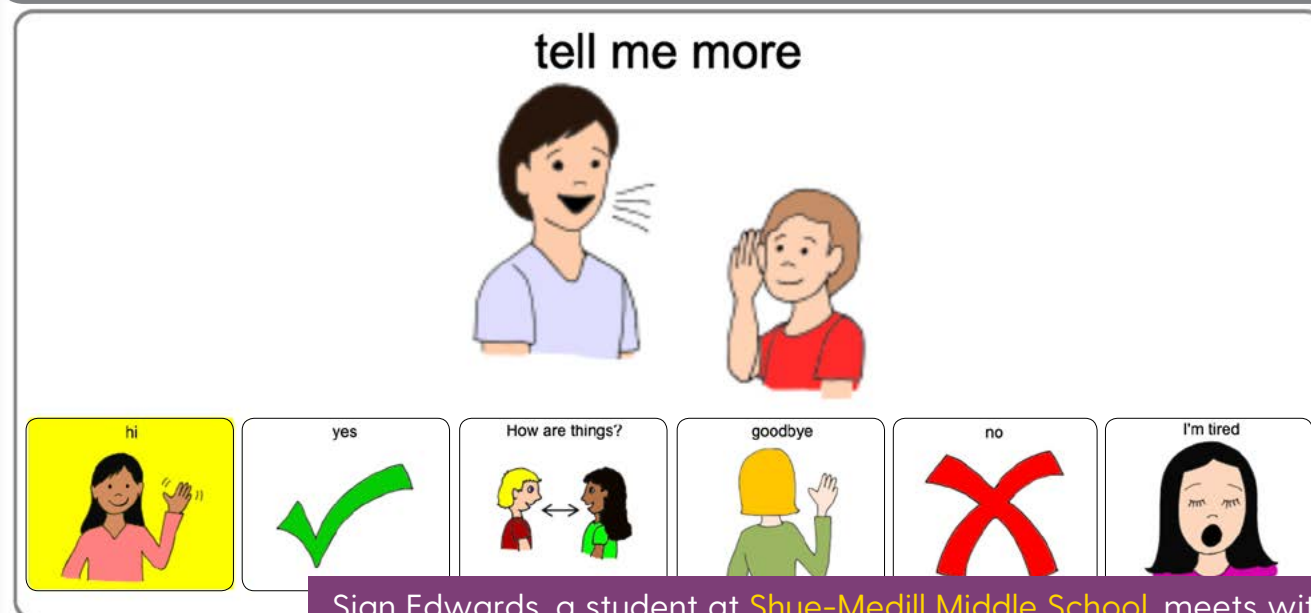
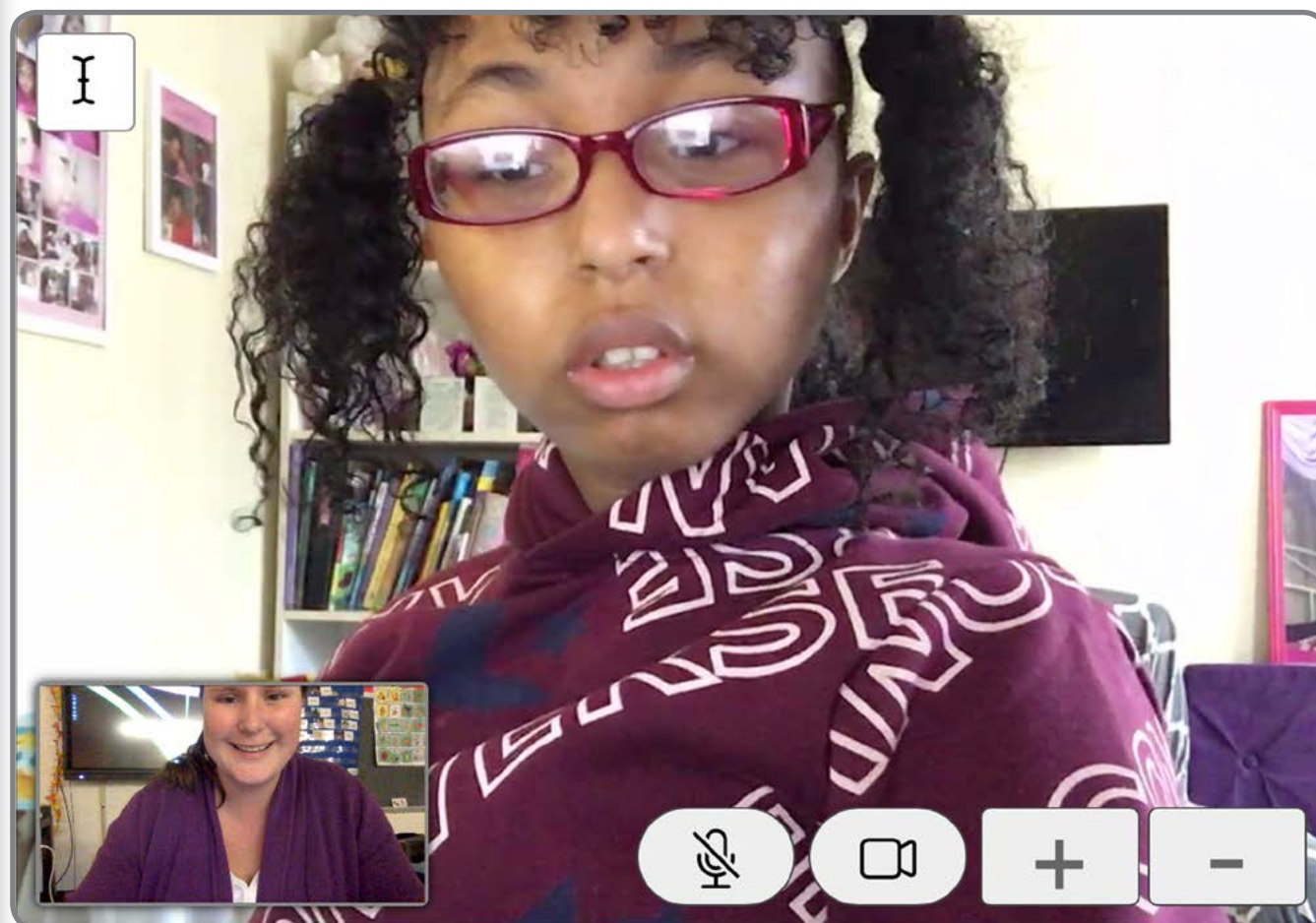
Then [Megan Conway](#), the program manager for CDS's [Adapting Curriculum and Classroom Environments for Student Success \(ACCESS\) program](#), discovered [Co-VidSpeak](#). A video chat app initially developed for intubated hospital patients, Co-VidSpeak shows both speaker and communication partner "boards" with preset words and phrases. Conway realized it could be effective in remote instruction, allowing teachers to program boards and to see students point at the choices with their hands or eyes.

Conway contacted the developer, Brian Whitmer, who offered a deal: free access to Co-VidSpeak in exchange for user feedback.

Starting in spring 2020, ACCESS coached about a dozen educators in remote teaching via Co-VidSpeak. By the end of the summer, almost three times as many had been trained.

Whitmer says educators' suggestions led to "multiple improvements" in the app, from shareable boards to auditory prompts.

Wanting to see it in wider use, MaryAnn Mieczkowski, director of the [Delaware Department of Education's Exceptional Children's Resources Workgroup](#), says Co-VidSpeak "can open up new worlds of communication."



Sian Edwards, a student at [Shue-Medill Middle School](#), meets with her teacher Lindsey Ferrero via the Co-VidSpeak video chat app.