 "Modes of communication" refers to what a child uses to communicate. Most adults in the world use a combination of spoken speech, gestures, and body language to communicate to one another. That is our means of communication. A child with a significant speech or language delay may have trouble with the spoken speech part of that. In this case, other means of communicating must be considered as appropriate alternatives.

Examples of Modes of Response:
- **Gestures and Body Language**
- **Sign Language**
- **Picture Exchange**
- **Communication Board:** A communication board is a simple alternative/augmentative communication (AAC) device where pictures of things the child may want to communicate are placed on a board and the child is asked to point to the picture of what he wants.
- **Voice-Output Device:** There are many devices out there (and now apps) that will help a child communicate by speaking a message when they push a button. These types of devices can store many different words and messages so they offer a greater variety of options for the child. These devices may take longer for a child to learn but they can grow to meet the child's linguistic needs as he or she gets older.

Note: Programs such as sign language, picture exchange, communication boards, AAC devices, core vocabulary boards are specialized programs which require collaboration and training of staff and family members. Specific information regarding these programs is referenced below:
- Sign Language with Children with Language Delays:
  https://www.speechandlanguagekids.com/using-sign-language/
- Including Sign Language in Early Childhood Classrooms:
  https://teachpreschool.org/2010/09/10/sign-language/
- Focused Interventions (includes Picture Exchange):
  https://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu/module/asd2/cresource/q2/p04/
- Quick and Easy Adaptations and Accommodations for Early Childhood (Teaching Exceptional Children)
  https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ967485.pdf Picture Exchange information – starting page 10
- PrAACtical AAC (includes links to websites, videos, strategies, and AAC Tool Box)
  http://praacticalaac.org/tag/early-childhood/

Strategies for Supporting Use of Gestures for Increasing Communication

The use of gestures is an important milestone in the development of communication skills. When children experience delays or difficulties with communication and language, they often make use of gestures which have served as their modes of responding to and initiating interactions.

- Point to or hold up objects during routines and interactions
- Use gestures that represent words, for example holding your hands in the shape of a ball when you say "ball."

- When a child uses a gesture or points to an object, respond in one of the following ways:

    o ***Look*** at it
    o ***Label***
    o ***Describe***
    o ***Ask*** about it

Accepting gestures such as pointing is important when children have difficulty communicating. When adults acknowledge and build on the gestures, it reduces frustration and encourages additional communication attempts.

Strategies for Using Visuals to Support Communication Development

Determine each child's "visual stage" for both receptive and expressive communication:
- Object Stage: use of actual objects
- Photo Stage: use of real photographs
- Picture Symbolic Stage: use of colored line drawings
- Line Drawing Stage: use of black and white line drawings
- Text Stage: use of written words and/or numbers

Use visuals during routines to teach and reinforce vocabulary. Remember to describe actions and talk about what is occurring during routines. Ask questions such as "What's next?" to encourage children to point to or verbalize next steps in routines.

Use visuals to support choice making. When first introducing choices, start with 2 or 3 familiar choices and pair the visuals with words so that children are learning the vocabulary associated with the visuals. Choices are an important motivator for communication so it is important that the choices are of interest to the children.

More information about using visuals: https://www.virtuallabschool.org/preschool/comm-lang-development/lesson-4; http://csefel.vanderbilt.edu/modules/module3b/handout2.pdf