Day With The Experts: Autism

Augmentative & Alternative Communication:
Supporting a Spectrum of Communication Needs and Skill Development

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AAC is...

- Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) relates to providing people with technology, either simple or high tech, which can replace or enhance their natural speaking or writing skills.
  - AAC can be used in conjunction with residual speech or to replace speech when needed.
  - AAC can be needed temporarily or permanently.
## AAC & Autism: Like a Hand in a Glove (Cafiero, 2005)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Autism</th>
<th>AAC</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Visual learners</td>
<td>• AAC uses visual cues</td>
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<td>• Interest in inanimate objects</td>
<td>• AAC tools &amp; devices are inanimate</td>
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<td>• Difficulty with complex cues</td>
<td>• Level of complexity can be controlled so AAC grows with the child</td>
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<td>• Difficulty with change</td>
<td>• AAC is static and predictable</td>
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<td>• Difficulty with the complexities of social interaction</td>
<td>• AAC provides buffer and bridge between communication partners</td>
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<td>• Difficulty with motor planning</td>
<td>• AAC is motorically easier than speech</td>
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<td>• Anxiety</td>
<td>• AAC interventions don’t apply pressure or stress</td>
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<td>• Behavioral challenges</td>
<td>• AAC provides an instant means to communicate, preempting difficult behaviors</td>
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<td>• Difficulty with memory</td>
<td>• AAC provides means for language comprehension that relies on recognition rather than memory</td>
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Some Good News… (Pat Mirenda, 2013)

- A review of research related to ASD and AAC suggests an overall reduction of children with ASD requiring AAC long term
- Still common to benefit from AAC, even if it is short term
- Number of peer reviewed articles on the topic of ASD and AAC has sky rocketed
- Increasing focus on literacy and evidence based tools for supporting literacy development
Supporting a Spectrum of Communication Needs and Skill Development Through AAC…

- Requires a careful match between AAC tools and the individual’s needs and skills
  - Communication Software, Page Sets & Hardware
- Includes selection of teaching approaches that can support skill development within different contexts and with different communication partners
- Considers approaches and encourages persistence afforded to learners that do not have disabilities and are learning to communicate via speech
When is the best time to get started using AAC?
“This is a good one. It means, ‘Until my every need is met, your life will be hell.’”
We don’t withhold spoken words (invisible, disappearing symbols) from babies until we are sure they understand them…
Talk to me with AAC symbols...
Children that will likely need to use AAC for expression rarely see others around them using AAC, and so have limited opportunity to learn the meaning of AAC symbols within meaningful, daily contexts…
Should we expect communicators with ASD to quickly start using AAC to confirm it is appropriate for them?
Though we start talking to babies immediately, fortunately we typically provide them with a lot of patience before we expect them to produce speech...
Is “one size fits all” a good idea when it comes to AAC systems?
ONE SIZE FITS ALL! TRUST ME!
The Pretend School District announces the selection of the One Size Fits All Communication App for all children requiring a communication system in our schools!
There is not a “one size fits all” starting point or sequence for AAC...proceeding like there is can lead to a mismatch and failure....
What can we do to promote communicative success using AAC?
AAC: Balance Effort With Motivation--Promotes Success (Bruce Baker)

**Effort:**
- Physical
- Cognitive
- Linguistic
- Time

**Motivation:**
- I want....
- I don’t want....
- Notice me....
AAC: High Effort & Low Motivation—Promotes Failure (Bruce Baker)

**Effort:**
- Physical
- Cognitive
- Linguistic
- Time

**Motivation:**
- I want….
- I don’t want…
- Notice me….
Can manipulate effort & motivation in AAC to promote success....

- Through selection and customization of an appropriate page set
  - Relevant and motivating vocabulary
  - Page organization and page linking that reduces effort to produce relevant single or multiple word messages
  - Sufficient vocabulary so that it can map into meaningful, daily situations (AAC is not just for snack time anymore!)
Can manipulate effort & motivation in AAC to promote success.

- Teaching strategies
  - Consider errorless teaching approaches to establish early expressive skills
  - Allow for an early focus on input to the communicator before expecting demonstration of AAC output
  - Partners can initially relieve the burden of page navigation to locate and teach relevant symbols within routines
  - Consider including strategies that are viable for a variety of communication partners to use within daily situations
AAC:

A Feature “wish list” to promote success
Feature “Wish List” for Communicators With ASD…

- Highly portable & durable
- Quick and easy start up and shut down
- Ability to lock out special/programming functions (e.g., Guided Access on iPads, edit locks)
- Ability to easily add photos and other meaningful symbols (e.g., web images)
- Insurance for rentals & extended warranty options
- Integrated calendar and scheduling functions
- Text to speech for reader/spellers
Feature “Wish List” for Communicators With ASD…

- Displays that can be quickly and easily modified (e.g., hiding symbols)
- Ability to easily change topics when activities change
- Ability to readily model new vocabulary and next steps in expressive language
- Direct selection access with keyguard options
- Page sets that allow expanding language without having to relearn
- Innovative page options (visual scene displays)
- Free from “deal breaker” distractions relative to the individual communicator (e.g., games, Velcro)
Some AAC Examples…

CONSIDERING THE SPECTRUM OF NEEDS & SKILL DEVELOPMENT
Communication Needs & Skill Development to Consider…

- Support comprehension
  - Visual support for understanding otherwise invisible elements of situations, choices, and expectations

- Teach the power of communication
  - Overlay AAC vocabulary/symbols within meaningful contexts
  - Establish communicative intent using AAC vocabulary

- Meaningful participation
Communication Needs & Skill Development to Consider…

- Establish functional expressive vocabulary
  - Requires selecting a consistent symbol set
- Establish expressive language skills including use of grammar
  - Teach skills needed for novel communication
  - Establish a developmental pathway
    - Series of related page sets that support the expansion of language skills over time
    - Build on experience vs. starting over each time a development jump is appropriate
Communication Needs & Skill Development to Consider…

- AAC vocabulary to address a range of communicative functions or purposes:
  - Attention seeking
  - Continuation (more) & Termination (escape/break)
  - Request or choose objects/actions
  - Provide information
  - Negation (no, reject, protest, complain)
  - Affirmation (yes, agree)
  - Comment
  - Protest
  - Ask and answer questions
  - Social Closeness
First a Quick Word On…

- Speech Generating Devices (SGD):
  - Can Be Dedicated Durable Medical Equipment (DME) or “Off the Shelf” Tablet/App Options
  - Accessories for tablets
- Funding for the different types of systems

(see handouts on these topics)
Dedicated Speech Generating Devices (SGD): Durable Medical Equipment (DME)

- Tobii Dynavox T Series
- Saltillo Nova Chat Series
- Prentke Romich Company (PRC) Accent Series
- Talk to Me Technologies WEGO
Keyguards & Cases

Must specify the app, page set, and other relevant specifications

Go Now iPad Case-Attainment Company

iAdapter Cases

Otterbox Defender Series
A Focus on Aided Language Stimulation

AAC SYSTEM EXAMPLES THAT SUPPORT PARTNER MODELING
Pragmatic Organization Dynamic Display (PODD)
Become a “tour guide” to language…

- Provide AAC “immersion” experience
  - Model use of the AAC system within daily situations
  - Go beyond offering choices within routines
- Related strategies and tools:
  - Aided Language Stimulation (Goossens & Crain)
  - Pragmatic Organization Dynamic Display (PODD) (Gayle Porter)
- Be persistent
- Focus on “teaching” and not “testing”
Compass App: PODD Page Sets

15 Location Options

60 Location Options

*Compass App and all page sets are available for free to all ASHA members*
Targeting & Supporting Novel Message Construction

AAC OPTIONS THAT TARGET DEVELOPING WORD BASED COMMUNICATION
Prentke Romich Company (PRC): Accent Devices-Unity Page Sets
TouchChat HD App

MultiChat 15 (English & Spanish)

Word Power Page Set Series
20 locations through 80 locations
Proloquo2Go App-Symbols

Crescendo Page Sets:
- Basic Communication
- Intermediate Core
- Advanced Core
Supporting Participation & Communication Efficiency

AAC TARGETING ACTIVITY BASED COMMUNICATION
Sono Flex App

Activity Based Home Page Option
General considerations related to AAC

- AAC systems are a tool and not an end in themselves
- Multiple modes are often essential to address diverse communication needs (e.g., low tech, mid tech, high tech)
- Figuring out the right AAC options is typically a process vs. an event
- Teaching and not testing is an essential focus when launching an AAC system
For More Information…

- Visit www.waisman.wisc.edu/aac:
  - Free video podcast series entitled “Enhancing Participation in Employment Settings Using Augmentative & Alternative Communication (AAC)"
  - Also available under “podcasts” at iTunes
  - Can view free videos online or download them to your computer or iPod
  - Related handouts posted with podcast episodes
AAC References


