

Literacy for AAC Users

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What are early literacy skills?

These are skills that facilitate **reading, writing, and reading comprehension**:

- Learning the sounds of letters (e.g., “sss”)
- Learning to put these sounds together to make words (e.g., d+o+g)
- Learning to take these sounds apart
- Learning to recognize some words by sight (e.g., ‘volcano’)
- Building reading comprehension

Shared reading is a great setting for literacy development!



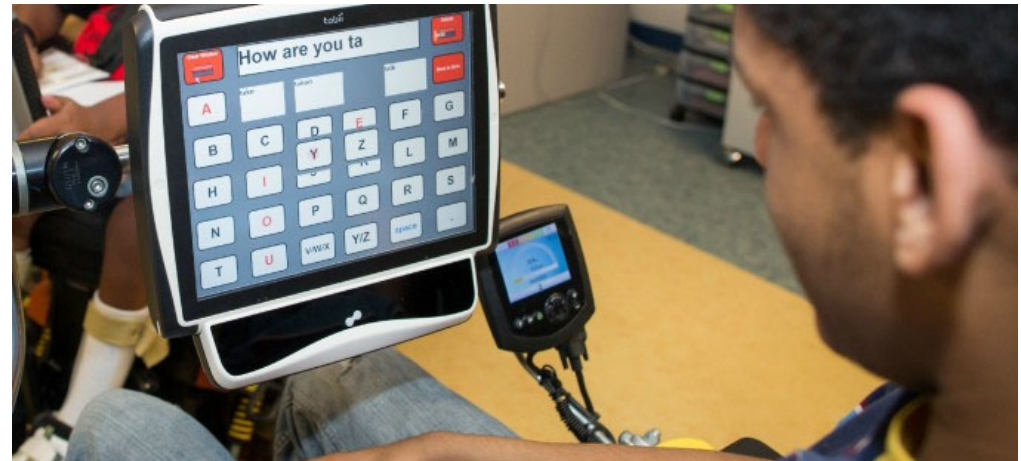
Literacy for AAC users

- Traditional literacy instruction draws on speech production skills
- We can adapt traditional literacy instruction for AAC users (Yorke et al., 2021)
- Individuals with complex communication needs across a range of diagnoses can acquire literacy skills (Mandak, Light, & Boyle, 2018)
- Everyone can learn literacy skills!



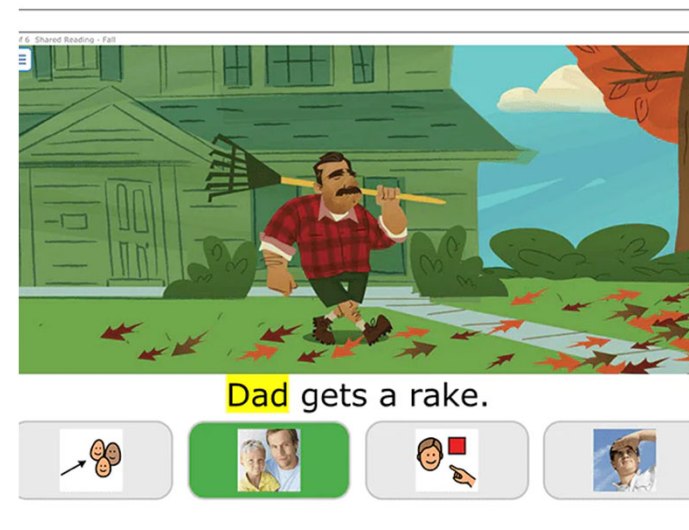
Literacy is self-determination!

- Unfortunately, individuals with disabilities have lower rates of employment (Katz & DeRose, 2010)
- Many barriers to education, social interaction, employment
 - literacy is essential to fully access these things
- Also allows full generative capacity to say ANYTHING and agency over their own vocabulary

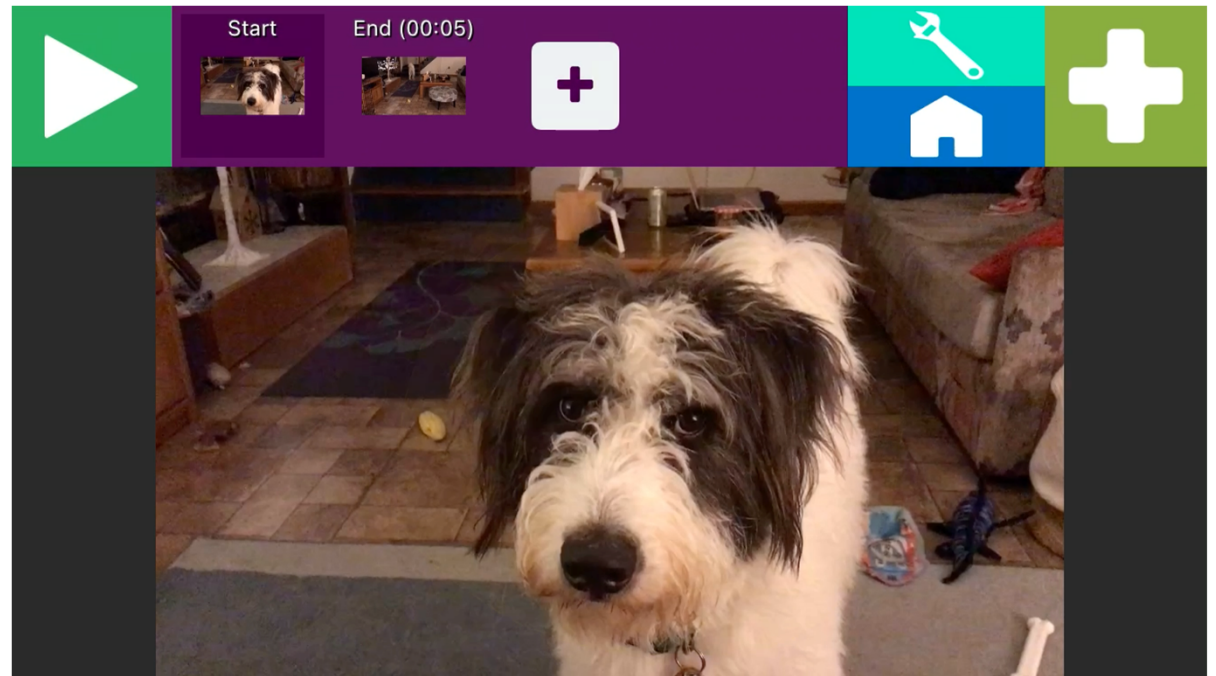


How do we teach literacy to AAC users?

- **Direct instruction** (e.g., Accessible Literacy Learning (ALL) curriculum)
 - Continuum of literacy skills (letter sounds, decoding, and sight words)
 - Embedded books
- Support learning through exposure to **dynamic text** on AAC system
- Daily activities (e.g., shared storybook reading, exposure to text in the environment)



Dynamic Text Feature within AAC System

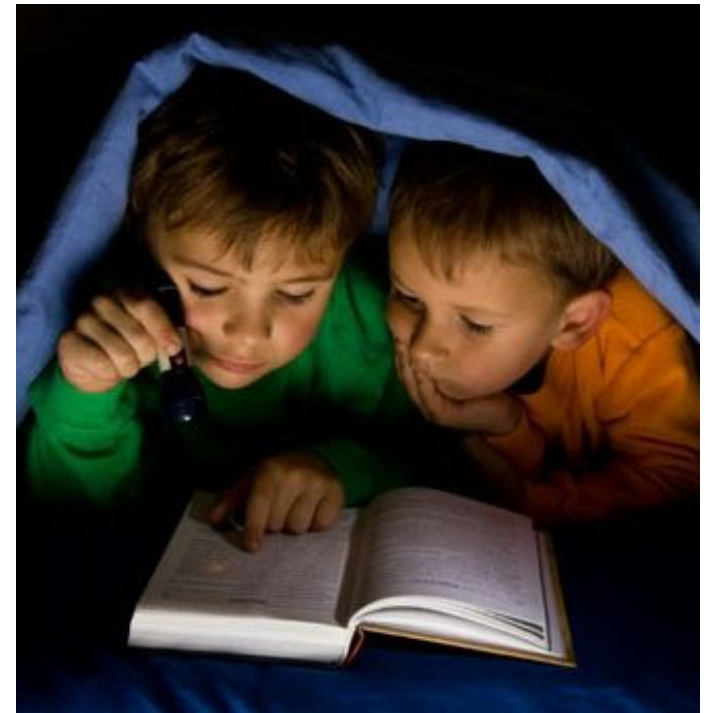




How do we bring literacy into daily activities?

Why is reading important for language?

- Acquisition of **new vocabulary** and linguistic concepts
- **Social activity** that also supports social language skills (e.g., turn-taking, asking questions, commenting)
 - Inclusive – can include peers, siblings, family members
- Supports early literacy skills and fosters interest in reading
- Structured activity for **incorporation of AAC system** and opportunity for the child to practice communicating with AAC



Shared storybook reading for early literacy!

Shared reading

- Provide opportunities for your child to "read" the book with you!
 - **Pause** reading the book text at key words that are shown in the illustrations
 - **Point** to the picture of the word in the illustration
 - Help your child **select** the corresponding button the AAC system



Shared storybook reading for early literacy!

Listening/reading comprehension

- **Read** book text
 - (and model on the AAC system!)
- **Ask** a *wh* question (e.g., who/what)
 - (and model on the AAC system!)
- (Pause)
- **Answer** question you asked
 - And model on the AAC system!



Shared storybook reading for early literacy!

Recognizing sight words

- Point to target **text** word throughout book (e.g., "bus")
- Point to **picture** in the book (e.g., picture of bus)
- Model selecting the corresponding **AAC button** in the AAC system
- Provide opportunities for your child to select targeted the **AAC button** (e.g., the button in their system for "bus")

(turn on dynamic literacy feature!)



Shared storybook reading for early literacy!

Learning Letter Sounds

- Pick one or two **letter sounds** to emphasize throughout the book (e.g., mmm, t, aaa, p)
- Point to a target letter at the start of a word and say the **sound**, then say the word (e.g., "Mmmm...Mom.")
- If your child points to the letter, also say the **sound**, then the word!





Incorporating AAC

- Positioning AAC so it is available
- Relevant vocabulary/topic page
- Modeling on the AAC system while you are reading
- Pausing for opportunities to participate



Tips & Tricks

- **Personalize!!** (motivating and meaningful, simplify, target words)
 - Light et al. (2021)
- Don't say letter names – say **letter sounds**
- You can do the **same books** multiple times; it doesn't have to be a new book each time
- You can go through a book first looking at pictures and guessing/talking about what the story might be about
- Provide **aided language input (model)**
- **Incorporate the AAC system**





reading resources

Websites:

- [AAC literacy website](#)
- [AAC Moodle](#)
- [Tarheel Reader](#)

Applications:

- [ALL app](#) (instructional)
- [TouchChat](#) (dynamic sight word feature)
- [SnapScene](#) (dynamic sight word feature)
- [GoVisual](#) (dynamic sight word feature)

References

Katz, E., & DeRose, R. (2010). The ADA 20 years later: the 2010 Survey of Americans with Disabilities. *The journal of spinal cord medicine*, 33(4), 345.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/10790268.2010.11689711>

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