

Communication for All: Understanding AAC Devices

Autism Society of Iowa
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About me

Patty Kann, M.Ed., M.A., CCC- SLP, received her undergraduate degree and M.A. from the University of South Dakota in Speech Language Pathology in 1996 and 1998 respectively. Patty also received her MS in Education from Wayne State University in 2009. She has worked in the medical setting in Long Term Care, Inpatient, NICU, Outpatient, and in school settings. Patty has completed extensive continuing education in Childhood Apraxia of Speech, Complex Communication Needs, Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) and Autism Spectrum Disorders. She was on the Nebraska Educational Service Unit #1 Autism team for 10 years. She currently works for the Northwest Area Education Agency in Sioux City, Iowa where she has been a member of the Autism team, the Assistive Technology team lead, and is currently serving in the role of Specially Designed Instruction (SDI) Best Practice Coach. Patty is a member of the American Speech Language Hearing Association.

"The silence of speechlessness is never golden. We all need to communicate and connect with each other – not just in one way, but in as many ways as possible. It is a basic human need, a basic human right. And more than this, it is a basic human power..."

Bob Williams

"Communication is not an end goal in and of itself, rather it is a tool to allow individuals to participate effectively and attain their goals at home, at school, at work or in the community"

Light & McNaughton, 2015. p. 4

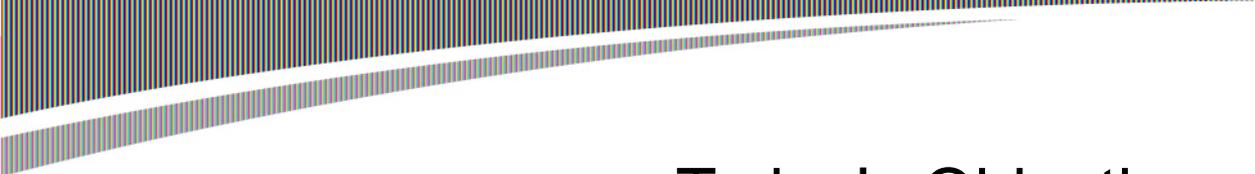
"A child who uses speech will independently select the words she wishes to use from the vast array of words she hears/sees used everyday.

A child who uses AAC will independently select the words she wishes to use from the vocabulary other people have chosen to model and, for aided symbols, made available for her to use."

Porter & Kirkland, 1995, p.93-94

Autonomous communication: Being able to say whatever I want to say, to whoever I want to say it to, whenever and wherever I want to say it

-Gayle Porter



Today's Objectives:

1. What are AAC Devices?
2. Who can benefit from using AAC?
3. How do we get an AAC Device?
4. How can someone use an AAC device throughout the day?

Speech & Language



Speech is how we say sounds and words.

We can hear it

Articulation

How we make speech sounds using the mouth, lips, and tongue.

Voice

How we use our vocal folds and breath to make sounds. Our voice can be loud or soft or high- or low-pitched.

Fluency

This is the rhythm of our speech. We sometimes repeat sounds or pause while talking. People who do this a lot may stutter

Language refers to the words we use and how we use them to share ideas and get what we want.

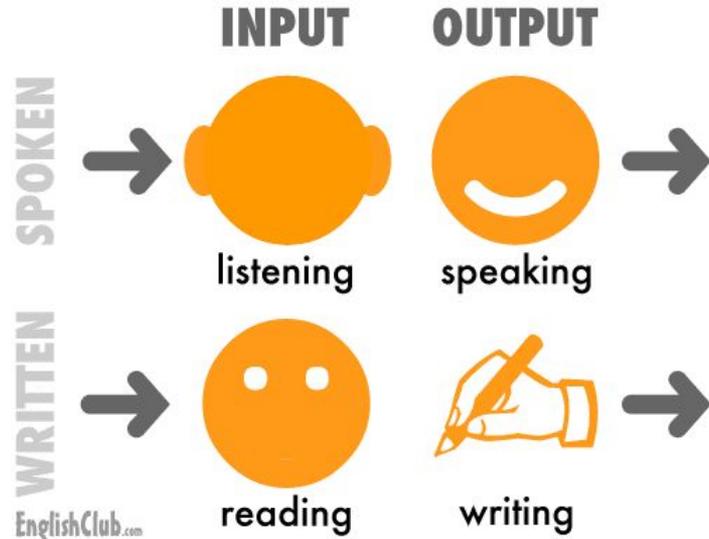
We can write it

Language includes:

- What words mean.
- How to put words together.
- How to make new words.
- What we should say at different times.

Language

Receptive language is the “input” of language, the ability to understand and comprehend spoken language that you hear or written language that you read. (or visuals that you see)



Expressive language is the “output” of language, the ability to express your wants and needs through verbal or nonverbal communication. It is the ability to put thoughts into words and sentences in a way that makes sense and is grammatically correct.

Language Development



The average 18-month-old has been exposed to 4,380 hours of oral language at a rate of 8 hours/day from birth. A child who has a communication system (AAC) and receives speech/language therapy 2 times/week for 20-30 minutes will reach the same amount of language exposure (in their AAC language) in 84 years.

Jane Karsten, SLP

Autism Spectrum Disorder

Augmentative and alternative communication—including the Picture Exchange Communication System, aided language modeling, and speech-generating devices— was revealed as a new category of evidence-based practice to address pre-academic/academic, communication, joint attention, play, and social skills in autistic children and young adults.

Steinbrenner, J. R., Hume, K., et al. (2020).



Creating Common Understandings about AAC

- ★ Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) can only improve expressive language skills
- ★ People who use some speech or even mostly speech, can benefit from having AAC support
- ★ AAC is not just a machine that can produce speech
- ★ There are no “prerequisites” for AAC
- ★ High tech is not the same as “high language skills”
- ★ If we want someone to learn it, we have to use it (Aided Language Stimulation)
- ★ AAC is not ONE thing- it is a continuum of AAC solutions

What are AAC Devices?

The American Speech Language Hearing Association (ASHA) defines augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) as **“all forms of communication (other than oral speech) that are used to express thoughts, needs, wants and ideas. We all use AAC when we make facial expressions or gestures, use symbols or pictures, or write.”**

There are two types of AAC techniques: unaided and aided.

- *Unaided communication* does not require any equipment that is external to the body and involves the use of symbols such as manual signs, pantomimes, and gestures.
- *Aided communication* incorporates devices that are external to the individuals who use them (e.g., communication books and VOCAs) and involves the use of symbols such as photographs, line drawings, letters, and words.

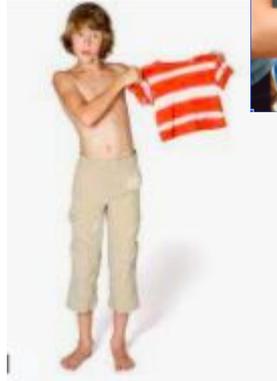
Most people use a combination of unaided and aided communication techniques, depending on the context and communication partner (Beukelman & Mirenda, 1998).

How to Determine the Right AAC System



SETT-
Student;
Environment;
Task;
Tools
- Joy Zabala

Today System &
Tomorrow System



How AAC Technology is Described

No tech-
“unaided”;
speech, sign,
gestures, facial
expressions, eye
blinks

Mid tech- Go Talk;
Single message
buttons, Tablets
with mid tech apps

Low tech- Picture
Exchange Communication
System (PECS); PODD;
Core Vocabulary Boards;

High tech- Dedicated
Speech Generating
Devices; Tablets with
robust language system
app



Low Tech Options for Emergent Communicators

Core Vocabulary Boards

We teach using core vocabulary on a single “board” by Aided Language Stimulation. This is simply pointing to or touching pictures as we say the words in natural settings.

“I like it”(touch each word as you say it) or “Time to Go” (just touch “go”). This should be used all day by all of the adults in the room.

project-core.com

like	want	get	make	good	more
not	go	look	turn	help	different
I	he	open	do	put	same
you	she	that	up	all	some
it	here	in	on	can	finished
where	what	why	who	when	stop

The Picture Communication Symbols ©1981-2013 by Mayer Johnson LLC. All Rights Reserved Worldwide. Used with permission.

PECS

Picture Exchange Communication System used by students that need to learn the process of the picture/paper exchange to get something they want/request such as food, toy, help, etc... (This should be documented in the IEP.) This is a very structured, systematic approach to teaching language. It is very specific noun focussed. PECS is difficult to use all day because it is so reward & noun driven.



Who can benefit from using AAC?

- ★ There are no “prerequisites” for AAC
- ★ There is no “too verbal” for AAC
- ★ Students who use some speech or even mostly speech, can benefit from having support with their language
- ★ AAC is appropriate for any child with a developmental language disorder that impacts communication success

- ★ It is understood that the primary aim of AAC intervention is to facilitate a child’s communicative competence through the use of multiple communication modalities that are by their very nature supplementing (“augmentative”) or replacing (“alternative”) natural speech (Light, Beukelman, & Reichle, 2003)

How can someone use an AAC device throughout the day?

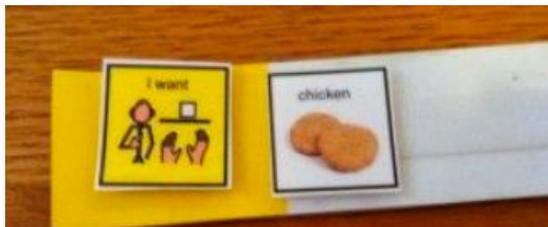
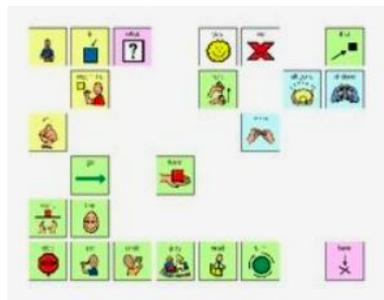
Start off on the right foot

1. Make sure AAC is ACCESSIBLE - ALL DAY
2. Aided Language Stimulation
3. Model without expectation
4. Model initiation of language using the AAC system
5. Get the right pieces in place at the right times
6. Consider 4 language domains: Refuse, Obtain, Social, Information

Model AAC & Keep it Accessible



PODD



ining.n2y.com

How do we get an AAC Device?

Start with your SLP and school district.

If a dedicated Speech Generating Device is right for your needs your SLP can help you decide if a Tablet and an app will be right for you or if you need to go with a dedicated device through a technology company.

Costs: iPad + Apps = \$600 and up; Dedicated devices: up to \$15,000

Options are:

- Private pay
- Insurance
- Medicaid

A FEW AAC Options

Low Tech

[Project Core](#)

[PECS](#)

Mid Tech

[Attainment Company](#)

[Ablenet, Inc.](#)

High Tech

[Talk to Me Technologies](#)

[PRC-Salttillo](#)

[Tobii-Dynavox](#)

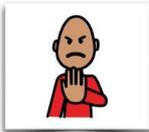
My Communication Bill of Rights



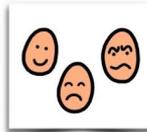
I have the right to my own friends and social life.



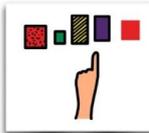
I have the right to ask for what and who I want and where to go.



I ALWAYS have the right to say, "no!"



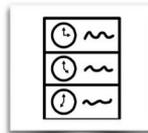
I have the right to say what I feel.



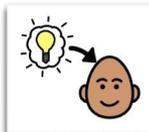
I have the right to make my own, real, choices.



I have the right to say what think.



I have the right to ask for, get and give information.



I have the right to know about the people in my life and everything happening to me.



I have the right to be taught to communicate and have what I need.



I have the right to have my communication system (and other tools), to have them working and to be with people who know how to set up, use and fix my communication system.



I have the right to be heard and answered, even if I can't have what I want.



I have the right to be part of my community



I have the right to be treated with respect.



I have the right to be talked to and not abused.



I have the right with be talked with in a way I understand.

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