
Integrating Augmentative and Alternative Communication — in the Home —

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Learning Objectives

- Define assistive technology and augmentative alternative communication (AAC)
- Identify how to obtain an AAC Evaluation and device
- Understand types of communication assistive technology
- Supporting expressive and receptive language with visuals
- Learn practical ways to support children's language and literacy through a variety of activities
- How using AAC supports life skills

What is Assistive Technology (AT)?

1. Each public agency shall ensure that assistive technology devices or assistive technology services, or both, as those terms are defined in 300.5-300.6, are made available to a child with a disability if required as a part of the child's –
 1. Special education under 300.26;
 2. Related services under 300.24; or
 3. Supplementary aids and services under 300.28 and 300.550(b)(2).
2. On a case-by-case basis, the use of school-purchased assistive technology devices in a child's home or in other settings is required if the child's IEP team determines that the child needs access to those devices in order to receive FAPE.

Definition of Assistive Technology

IDEA Sec. 300.5 Assistive technology device.

- Assistive technology device means any item, piece of equipment, or product system, whether acquired commercially off the shelf, modified, or customized, that is used to increase, maintain, or improve the functional capabilities of a child with a disability.
- The term does not include a medical device that is surgically implanted, or the replacement of such device.



How to obtain assistive technology

- *School systems* pay for general special education learning materials as well as technology specified in an IEP.
- *Government programs* (Social Security, veteran's benefits, or state Medicaid agencies) pay for certain assistive technology if a doctor prescribes it as a necessary medical device.
- *Private health insurance* pays for certain assistive technology if a doctor prescribes it as a necessary medical or rehabilitative device.
- *Rehabilitation and job training programs*, whether funded by government or private agencies, may pay for assistive technology and training to help people get jobs.
- *Employers* may pay for assistive technology that is a reasonable accommodation to enable an employee to perform essential job tasks.

Source: Assistive Technology Industry Association

NC Assistive Technology Program (NCATP)

- NCATP has locations across the [state](#).
- NCATP will no longer provide AAC Assessments through Medicaid or private insurance but will continue to provide fee based assessments, device demonstrations, loans and reutilization, training, technical assistance, public awareness, and assistance with obtaining funding for AT, as well as work with LME/MCO's to develop additional capacity and resources for AT/AAC assessments.

Source: NCATP Website

AT Evaluations Referral



Evaluation Referral:

- Requires an IEP team meeting to formally request an evaluation
- Can be a part of an initial evaluation or re-evaluation (AT does not need to attend)
- If team completes a programmatic evaluation it does not reset the evaluation timeline, therefore no need for eligibility paperwork, just add results in IEP
- Required for students who may need a dedicated system
- Student is referred to AT Team for evaluation
- Assessment designed and completed.
- Follow-up is provided as needed

Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC)

According to ASHA (American Speech Language and Hearing Association):

AAC includes 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.

Every child has the right to communicate.

Non-verbal and Low-verbal children should be provided with a means to participate through communication throughout the day. Communication should not have to wait for speech.

Sign Language

Thoughts about introducing sign language

- Sign Language is useful with young children as a beginning form of communication. Words such as: more, drink, eat, want are useful communication tools.
- If a child has a significant hearing loss and has the fine motor skills to produce signs this may be an effective means of communication especially if the family learns sign language and the child is immersed in a signing community.
- For children who will not be immersed in the signing community, AAC is a more functional alternative to sign language because it is a more universal way to communicate.

Sign Language

- Do you know what this sign means?



Sign Language

- Do you know what this symbol means?



- If your child shows the cashier this symbol would they know what the order is?
- Yes
- Use of a communication system with picture symbols will make your child a more independent communicator.

Overview of Common Communication Devices

- A Speech Language Pathologist can evaluate and trial communication systems to determine the best system to meet the child's needs.
- There are a wide range of systems available that can be assessed to best meet the student's needs.
- The following are examples of communication systems

Common Voice Output Devices

Big Mack: Single message voice output device



Step-by-Step: multi-level message sequencer



2 Message Communicators

Twin Talk: provides 2 choices



1 Talk2 with levels: 3 levels with
2 choices on each level



Multiple Message Devices

Cheap Talk 4:



6-Level Communicator:



Other Types of Speech Generating Devices

Go Talks:



QuickTalkers:



Communication Books

Flip N' Talk



PODD



iPad Based Communication Apps

TD Snap Core First



TD Snap Motor Plan 30



LAMP WFL



Proloquo2Go



TouchChat w/ WordPower



Coughdrop



Examples of Insurance Funded Communication Devices

ACCENT 800/1000
(LAMP WFL or UNITY)



Tobii Dynavox I-110



NOVACHAT



Ablenet Quicktalker
Freestyle



TD SC Tablet



Core Vocabulary Board



Created by DPS
AT Team.
Adapted from
Project Core 36
location Universal
Coreboard
Project-core.com

What is Project Core/Universal Core?

Core vocabulary is a small set of words that make up about 80% of what we say day to day. <https://www.project-core.com/quick-start-guide/>

Core words are highly useful, flexible, and functional.

- Core consists of about 300-400 words.
- 90% overlap of core in preschool to adult age

Most high tech AAC systems are already designed to promote robust, core vocabulary.

Source: Project-Core.com

Collaboration and Consistent Implementation

- It is important for families, teachers, school based therapists, private therapists and service providers to work together to implement any assistive technology.
- Consistent use of assistive technology across settings will ensure that the student will learn to use the recommended system.
- The same strategies for implementation should be used in a variety of environments.

You have the device, now what?

- Provide opportunities for communication
 - Meal time-requesting, commenting, choice making
 - Shared Reading-commenting, answering questions, asking questions
 - Playtime-choice making, answering questions, commenting
- Do not put it on a shelf or in a drawer; you will be taking away the child's voice. Everyone has the right to communicate
- Expect everyone to use the child's device
- Pick a few words to focus on at a time



Best Practices for Implementing AAC

- Presume competence/potential
- Access / Make AAC available at all times
- Aided Language Stimulation/Input and modeling
- Teach language functions (directing, commenting, requesting assistance, protesting, ask/answer questions, etc.)
- Provide Core Vocabulary
- Use Descriptive Teaching strategies
- Follow prompt hierarchy

What is Aided Language Stimulation?

Teaching your student how to communicate with their AAC device by...

pointing to symbols.

Providing them with a language model by...

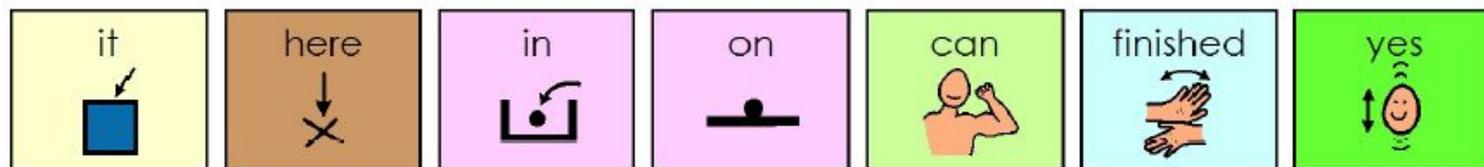
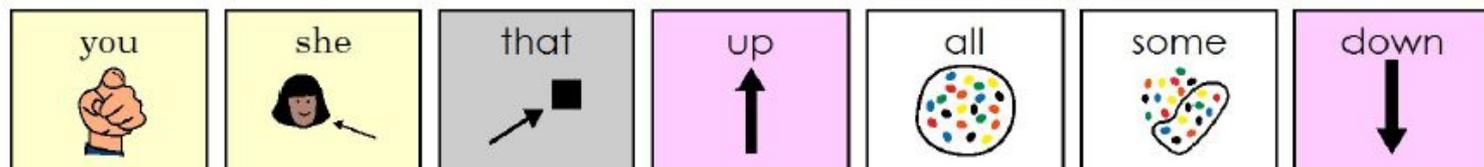
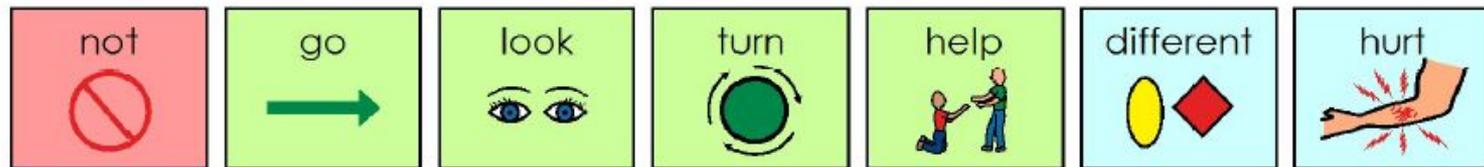
labeling and expanding upon what you are pointing to.

More about Aided Language Stimulation

- Even if you are only pointing to one symbol, say a whole sentence.
- Respond to whatever your child says.
- Do not feel like you have to provide aided language stimulation for everything you say to your child.
- [Aided Language Input Explained](#)

Examples of how to model AAC

- Remember to always verbally model at a language level above where your student currently communicates, but not so much above that the student receives too much language stimulation.
 - If the student produces one word utterances (through pictures or words), model at 2-3 word utterances.
 - If the student combines 2-3 words, model 4-6 word utterances.
- Go is a great word to target across many activities.
 - Say, "Time to go" while activating the word /go/ on the AAC system.
 - Say, " Do you want to go?" while activating /want go/
 - While playing with a toy that can go and stop, say and model /go/ and turn the toy on. Then model /stop/ and turn the toy off.



Augmentative Communication Supports Life Skills

- Communication is one of the most basic life skills. When children can communicate, they are not only able to get basic wants and needs met but can express feelings, make comments, ask and answer questions, and protest.
- Many children are very expressive with their body language, facial expressions, gestures and word approximations; however people who are not close to the person may not be able to “read” and understand their communication attempts.
- Use of AAC can help to bridge that gap so that a student can function in a variety of environments leading to more independence.

Questions???

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