Unlocking Communication Potential for Students: Aligning Supports/Systems for TODAY & TOMORROW

Iowa Special Education Symposium
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Background

- Struggle between balancing communication supports and systems for Today AND Tomorrow’s needs.

  - “A ‘system for today’ should require a minimum of training and practice in order for the individual to use it effectively to communicate messages about his or her most important and immediate needs.”
    ~Beukleman & Mirenda, 2013

  - “A ‘system for tomorrow’ can be an expansion or extension of the system for today, or it can involve a different device or technique.”
    ~Beukleman & Mirenda, 2013
Objectives

➢ Understand considerations that might help to determine best matched communication supports for individual students

➢ Sort through and clarify available supports, instruction and communication options

➢ Introduce a process for decision-making relative to communication
APT: AAC Planning Tool

- Dynamic AAC assessment
  - via the *APT: AAC Planning Tool*

- Identify the Type of Communicator:
  
  Emergent Non-symbolic
  Emergent Symbolic
  Context-Dependent
  Independent
## SETT for AAC

**Complex Communication Needs Consideration:**  
*Student, Environment, Tasks and Tools (SETT-AAC)*


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STUDENT:</th>
<th>ENVIRONMENT:</th>
<th>TASKS:</th>
<th>TOOLS:</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What are the student's communication skills and needs?</td>
<td>Classes and activities where communication support is needed including home and community-based environments</td>
<td>What are the communication skills/tasks that the student needs to be able to accomplish.</td>
<td>Discuss and list available AAC system/device features, possible communication tools and supports and discuss appropriateness for the student.</td>
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<td><strong>Type of Communicator:</strong></td>
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<td>☐ Emergent Presymbolic/Paintentional</td>
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<td>☐ Emergent Symbolic</td>
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<td>☐ Independent</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Etiology/Medical Health Status:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>☐ Does this student have significant physical impairment?</td>
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<td>☐ Does this student have significant hearing impairment?</td>
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<td>☐ Hearing Status:</td>
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<td>☐ Vision Status:</td>
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<td>☐ What has been tried in the past to support communication?</td>
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<td>☐ What is the percentage of time in special education?</td>
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<tr>
<td>☐ What is the percentage of time in self-contained classroom?</td>
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<td>☐ List communication supports, materials, equipment currently being used &amp; in what environments?</td>
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<td>☐ What does the student need to be able to do that he/she is not able to do as a result of their communication disability?</td>
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<tr>
<td>☐ What are you looking for?</td>
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<td>☐ Who or what prompted you to submit a request for collaboration from the AAC Resource Team?</td>
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<td>☐ What is the priority AAC need/question?</td>
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<td>☐ Current related IEP goal:</td>
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**Discuss and list available AAC system/device features, possible communication tools and supports and discuss appropriateness for the student.**

1) **Sensory/Motor** (discuss access & sensory feedback mode)
2) **Cognitive-Communication** (discuss operational skill, language content and organization, literacy and flexibility for growth)
## Mobility:
- Amputator
- Ambulatory
- Mobility Walker
- Wheelchair
- Gait Trainer
- Other: __________

## Physical Access: (check all that apply)
- Direct Select: [ ] YES [ ] NO
  - Hand
  - Finger
  - Eyegaze
  - Other: __________
- Adapted Direct Select via:
  - Headpointer/Mouthstick
  - Keypad
  - Trackball
  - Trackpad
  - Joystick
  - Other: __________

### Switch Access: [ ] YES [ ] NO
- If YES:
  - Switch Name/Type: __________
  - # of Switches: __________

## List naturally occurring communication opportunities in all environments? (e.g. School, Home & Community environments)
- What partner training has been provided specific to supporting the student's communication needs?
- What other resources/supports are available to communication partners? (coaching planning time, adapted materials/curriculum, etc.)
- What potential barriers to communication opportunities were observed or have been identified?

## Discuss activities/routines throughout the day where additional support is needed. (refer to Ecological Inventory)
- After an AAC supports/system/device(s) have been identified, discuss the following:
  - Describe interventions/needs related to each Communication Competency:
    - Linguistic
    - Social
    - Operational
    - Strategic
  - What partner behavior(s) might be used to support success for the identified communication target? What barriers?
  - What training/support is needed for student, family and/or other communication partners?

## Environmental (programming, maintenance, repair and portability)
- Describe the team's vision of what the student needs to be able to do to meet communication needs for:

### TODAY Communication System:
- [ ]

### TOMORROW Communication System:
- [ ]

## AAC Device/System Trial:
- Please use appropriate form to document AAC device/system details.
- Describe AAC system/device(s) to trial:
- Goal for trial:
Related Considerations During AAC Supports & Language System Selection

➢ Anxiety
➢ Auditory Processing
➢ Self-regulation/Wait Time
➢ Arousal state
➢ Social vs. object motivation
➢ Initiation skills/joint attention
➢ Ability to generate novel communication
➢ Impact of Fatigue
➢ Impact of Medications
➢ Physical and Fine Motor Skills
Communication Supports/Language Systems

“Decision-making for tomorrow should be concurrent with decision-making for today, under most circumstances.” (Beukleman & Mirenda, 2013)

**Today**
- Symbolic Representation & Access
- Supports to Reduce behaviors
- Switch Access to increase participation and social communication skills
- Response to existing means of nonverbal communication acts

**Tomorrow**
- Expansion or Extension of a “Today system” OR something completely different
- Expanded language/vocabulary access that can grow with the learner of AAC
- Access to flexible comprehensive language system
For the students you work with, what kind of Today or Tomorrow communication supports, tools and/or systems are you familiar with and/or currently using with learners of AAC?

Communication Bill of Rights:
Alway “Presume Potential”
What would be the difference between a communication support and a communication language system?
The Dance Between: “TODAY & TOMORROW”
and “SUPPORTS & Language SYSTEMS”
Communication/Language Supports

1. Provides opportunities for increased levels of active participation
2. Allow quick access for simple choice-making
3. May promote development of joint attention and/or other specific social language skills including initiation, turn-taking, directing the attention of others etc.
4. Can be used in cases of behavioral challenges as a quick replacement for expression of frustration (requesting a break, asking for help).
Communication/Language Systems

1. Allows for **SNUG: Spontaneous Novel Utterance Generation**
2. Provides access to a Wide Range of Vocabulary, Word Classes and Communicative Intents
   a. Nouns, verbs, adjectives, etc.
   b. Request, Protest/Refuse, Comment/Opinion, Gain Attention, Social, Inform/Share Information
3. Understood by a Wide Range of Communication Partners
4. Easily Customized for Individual Learner’s of AAC
Padlet

Now… let’s sort these items together:
Is each item listed an AAC Support or an AAC Language System?

Why?
Case Study #1 - Communication Supports or Communication Language Systems? Today or Tomorrow?

**Student:** A 7 year old student with an autism spectrum disorder who uses jargon and echolalia, and a couple echolalic scripts. A “PECs-like” system is currently being used to improve his initiation and requesting skills. Following an AAC assessment and device trial, an iPad with the Speak for Yourself app was ordered by the district.

**Environment:** Elementary autism program; integrated into 2nd grade general education for approximately 70% of the day. A visual picture schedule is provided to represent his day and reduce anxiety.

**Tasks:** During work times, the student can become frustrated and throw tasks. School team would like the student to communicate frustration and needs in a more adaptive way. A Big Mac switch is currently provided to request a break. Team desires to expand communicative vocabulary and intents beyond requesting.

**Tools (Supports or Systems):** PECs-like system; Speak for Yourself iPad AAC app; Visual Picture Schedule; Big Mac switch
Case Study #1 Solution - Communication Supports or Communication Language Systems? Today or Tomorrow?

**Student**: A 7 year old student with an autism spectrum disorder who uses jargon and echolalia, and a couple echolalic scripts. A “PECs-like” system is currently being used to improve his initiation and requesting skills. Following an AAC assessment and device trial, an iPad with the Speak for Yourself (SFY) app was ordered by the district.

**Environment**: Elementary autism program; integrated into 2nd grade general education for approximately 70% of the day. A visual picture schedule is provided to represent his day and reduce anxiety.

**Tasks**: During work times, the student can become frustrated and throw tasks. School team would like the student to communicate frustration and needs in a more adaptive way. A Big Mac switch is currently provided to request a break. Team desires to expand communicative vocabulary and intents beyond requesting and therefore exploring SFY app.

**Tools - Supports or Systems: Today or Tomorrow??**
Case Study #2- Communication Supports or Communication Language Systems? Today or Tomorrow?

**Student**: A 10-year old student with cerebral palsy who is extremely social and engaged with familiar adults & peers. Her verbal speech attempts for the most part are unintelligible however she does use pointing to direct the attention of others. She also has access to a light tech picture choice board where she consistently points to the desired symbol from an array of 3 to indicate her choice and/or to respond to questions.

**Environment**: She is currently integrated into Gen Ed classes 20% of the day with 1:1 para support. Core vocabulary has been introduced in the Special Education classroom and she accesses an individual Core Vocab board however access to sufficient Personalized Fringe Vocabulary is challenging.

**Tasks**: The IEP team has created a communication/language goal is to identify a more consistent and robust language system for the student and are considering a PODD 12 Expanded Communication Book with future option of iPad access of the same pageset.

**Tools**: Supports or Language Systems... Today or Tomorrow??
Case Study #2 Solution- Communication Supports or Communication Language Systems? Today or Tomorrow?

**Student:** A 10-year old student with cerebral palsy who is extremely social and engaged with familiar adults & peers. Her **verbal speech** attempts are for the most part unintelligible however she does use **pointing to direct the attention of others.** She also has access to a **light tech picture choice board** where she consistently points to the desired symbol from an array of 3 to indicate her choice and/or to respond to questions.

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**Tools:** Supports or Language Systems… Today or Tomorrow??
5 Keys for Student Success with Augmentative/Alternative Communication Supports & Language Systems
Key #1

Need to IDENTIFY as a team whether you are discussing and/or utilizing a Communication Support or a Communication “Language” System.
Key #2

Discussion of Today and Tomorrow communication needs (Supports & Systems) are critical considerations.
Key #3

Communication should be **individualized** to meet the learner’s specific communication needs.
Key #4

All learners need exposure/access to an AAC system aligned with S/NUG (Spontaneous Novel Utterance Generation).
Key #5

It is a **dance** between meeting the communicative needs for TODAY and building language learning for TOMORROW.

“If you don’t know where you’re going, how will you know if you’ve got there?” ~Leigh Ashton
Purposes of Communication

Purposes of AAC: (adapted from Porter & Burkhart, 2009, 2017)

1) To understand others and to be understood.
2) Build social relationships with others.
3) Initiate communicative interactions.
4) To provide an efficient means to intelligibly and specifically communicate one’s own thoughts.
Questions/Comments

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