

Fostering Inclusion through AAC and AT



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- Early Childhood Speech Pathologist 2013-2021
- K-5 Speech Pathologist 2021-present
- SLP/AAC Specialist-present

Independent Contractor, Kansas City Metro

- Chadwick Speech Therapy Gladstone, Mo
- Playabilities Prairie Village, KS
- Comprehensive Therapies and Tutoring Platte City, Mo



Disclosures

Kristen Ponce has Financial and Non-Financial Relationships to disclose.

Kristen receives a salary from Park Hill School District in Kansas City, Missouri. She is a member of the American Speech and Hearing Association and a part of the Special Interest Group #12 on Augmentative and Alternative Communication. Kristen is a board member for Sophie's Run at Lake Waukomis. Kristen has no financial ties to the AAC systems and supports that will be discussed in this presentation.

Session Objectives

- 1). As a result of this activity, participants will identify two barriers that exist to AAC implementation using the Participation Model of AAC.
- 2). As a result of this activity, participants will review AAC and AT tools and supports available to be used as a universal design for learning.
- 3). As a result of this activity, participants will differentiate ways to use peer groups to promote inclusion through AAC and AT.

What is AT?

AT=Assistive Technology

“Assistive technology (AT) is any item, piece of equipment, software program, or product system that is used to increase, maintain, or improve the functional capabilities of persons with disabilities.”

-The Assistive Technology Industry Association

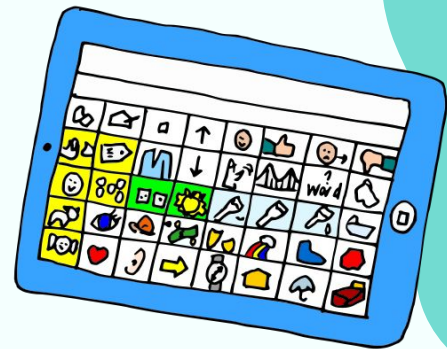


What is AAC?

AAC = augmentative and alternative communication

"AAC includes all of the ways we share our ideas and feelings without talking."

-The American Speech and Hearing Association



Park Hill School District



- 20 schools with around 12,000 students
- 1 full time AT Facilitator and 1 part time AAC Specialist
- 1:1 devices for all students
- 230 AAC devices
 - Personal and school owned
- There is at least one AAC user in each building
- Do not have to be in a self-contained classroom to use AAC
- 5 different high tech AAC systems
 - Variety of low and mid-tech options

Laying the foundation

Do you believe students can authentically communicate using AAC?





Sophie's Run at Lake Waukomis



The Journey

2007

- Low-mid tech devices
- Dedicated high tech devices on loan

2013

- Mid-tech devices gifted for AT Library through Sophie's Run

2014

- First Trials with iPads and AAC apps on loan
- Purchased first iPad with AAC app
- First AAC device gifted to families through Sophie's Run

2017

- MDM system purchased by the district

AT today

- 20 SLPs in 20 schools providing AAC therapy.
- All K-12 SLPs and SC teachers have AAC devices.
- Access to multiple iPads for communication.
- Access to mid tech device.
- Access to different switches.
- Consistent working relationship with the Missouri AT loan library.
- AT not limited to AAC
 - Wheelchair trials
 - Vision
 - Academics



Who Can Use AT and AAC?



Everyone!

Individuals who are non-speaking:
Primary method of communication

Individuals who have some verbal language:
Used as a way to increase expressive language.

Individuals who are verbal:
visual supports to increase comprehension; support for academic areas; aids for communication breakdown.

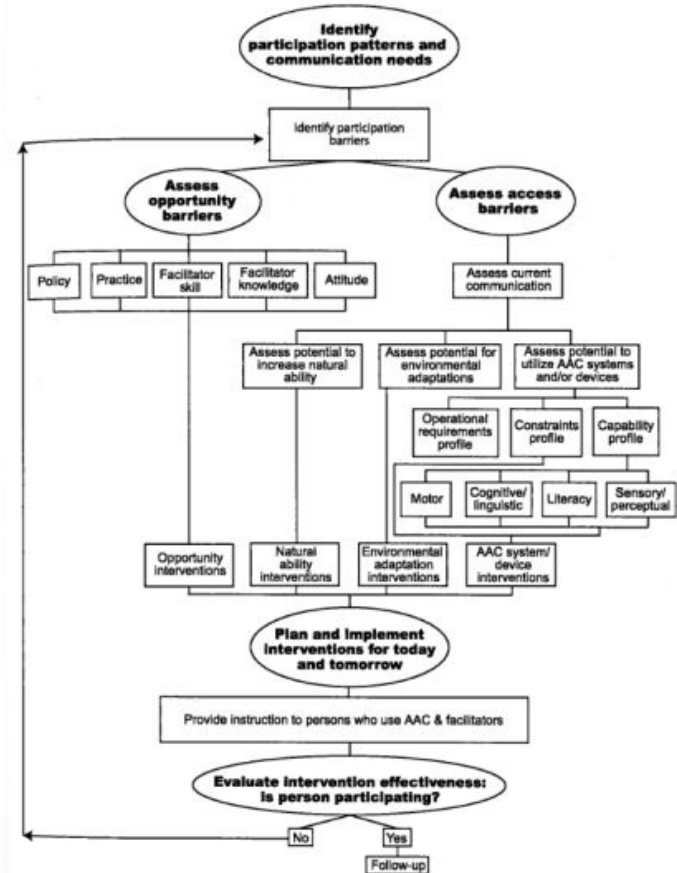
Participation Model of AAC

Beukelman & Mirenda (2013)

Opportunity and Access

“Opportunity barriers refer to those that are imposed by people other than the individual with CCN and that cannot be eliminated simply by providing an AAC system or intervention (pg. 113).”

“Access barriers, on the other hand, are present primarily because of limitations in the current capabilities of the individual or his or her current communication system (pg.113).”



Opportunity Barriers

Barriers that "are imposed by persons other than the individual with the severe communication disorder and that cannot be eliminated simply by providing an AAC system or intervention."



- Communication partner skill, knowledge, and attitude.
- Providing and fostering opportunities for use
- Abolistic mindset
- Building Awareness

Too many systems

Staff feel overwhelmed with multiple systems:

- Learning the new system
- Motivation to learn a new system
- Features on each system are different
- Missed opportunities for teaching
- Access



Lack of willingness to learn a new system

- Preferences towards a certain system
- Support materials are already created for with other symbol sets.
- Time. It takes time to learn a new system.
- Access to materials.
- Students not letting you touch their systems



A close-up photograph of a baby's mouth, with a finger inserted into the mouth. The background is a soft, out-of-focus light color.

BY 18 MONTHS
babies have heard
4,380 HOURS

OF SPOKEN
LANGUAGE

and we don't expect them
to be fluent speakers

YET

If AAC learners only see symbols modeled for
communication twice weekly for 20-30 minutes, it will take

84 YEARS

for them to have the same exposure to aided language
as an 18 month old has to spoken language.

statistic from Jane Korsten - QIAT Listserv 2011

photo by Rachael Langley - AAC Specialist

Modeling

Effective modeling needs to become a habit.

- What do I model?
- How do I include more modeling?
- Accessing resources for modeling
- Hard to model on a system that you are learning



Access barriers

“Those which are internal to the person using AAC such as attitude, capabilities and constraints (e.g. motor, literacy, cognitive-linguistic, and sensory-perceptual skills).”



- Access to a system
- Access to an appropriate system
- Environmental modifications

Motivation

- Create motivating opportunities to encourage communication.
- Emergent communicators need to be motivated.
- Too much focus on easily trackable language targets not meaningful language.



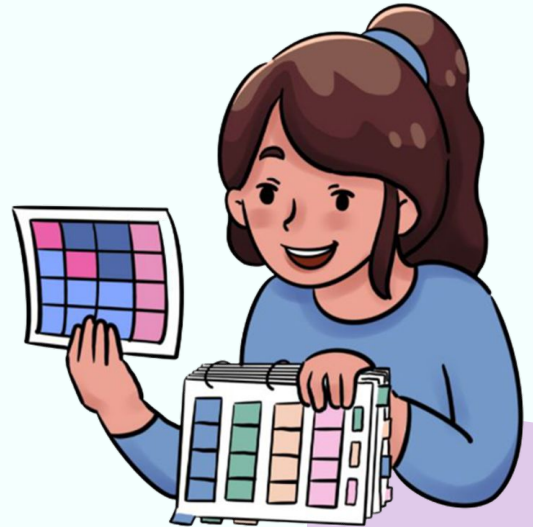
Appropriate vocabulary selection

Considerations for vocabulary selection:

- What is the student doing spontaneously?
- What types of words are they using?
- How are they navigating the system?

How does the student learn language?

- Analytic language learner
- Gestalt language learner



Selecting a System

How does the student learn language?

- Analytic language learner
- Gestalt language learner
 - Selection Style
 - Direct select
 - Eye gaze
 - Switch scanning
 - Motor Planning vs. Category based

Navigation Systems

Linguistic

Language or
linguistic
based

Yellow	Yellow	Green	Green	Blue	Blue
Yellow	Yellow	Green	Green	Blue	Blue
Red	Yellow	Green	Blue	Blue	Blue
White	Yellow	Green	Blue	Blue	Grey

Operational

Motor plan
based

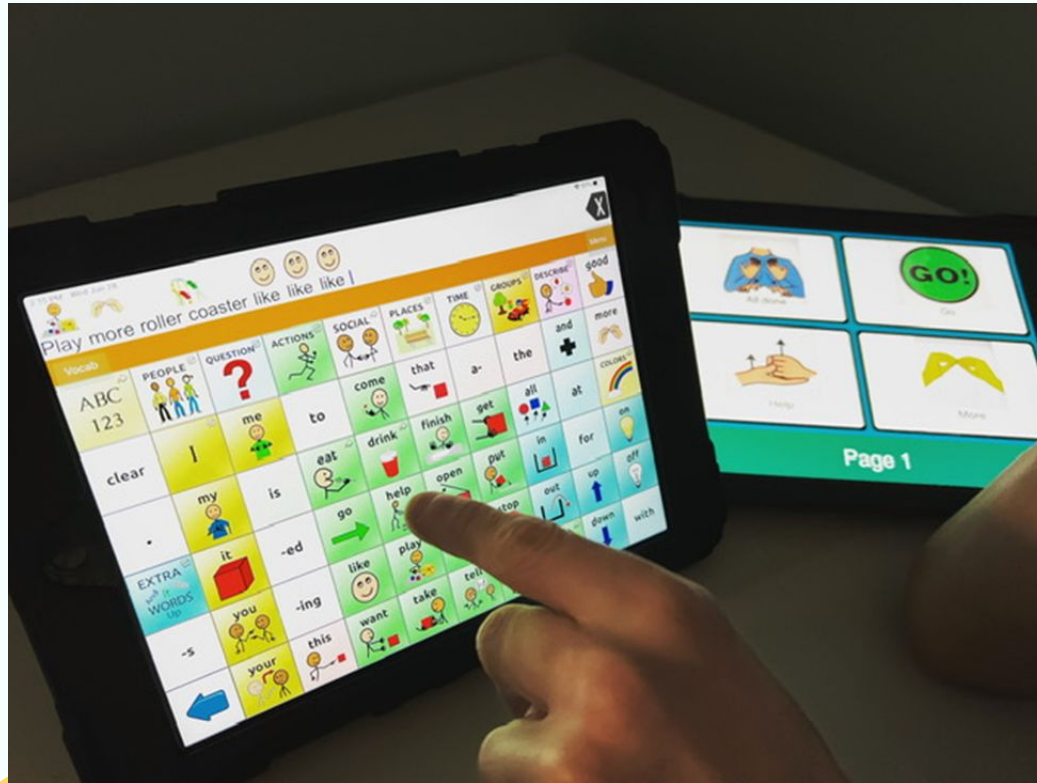
Environmental

Topic based

Pragmatic

Social
language
based

The Importance of Robust AAC



Tools

- Posters!
- Free Editing software!
- Core boards!
- Playground boards!



Alternative Access

“AAC devices offer a variety of alternate access methods including eye tracking, head tracking, AAC switches and joysticks so individuals with physical limitations can operate his or her device.”

~PRC-Salttillo

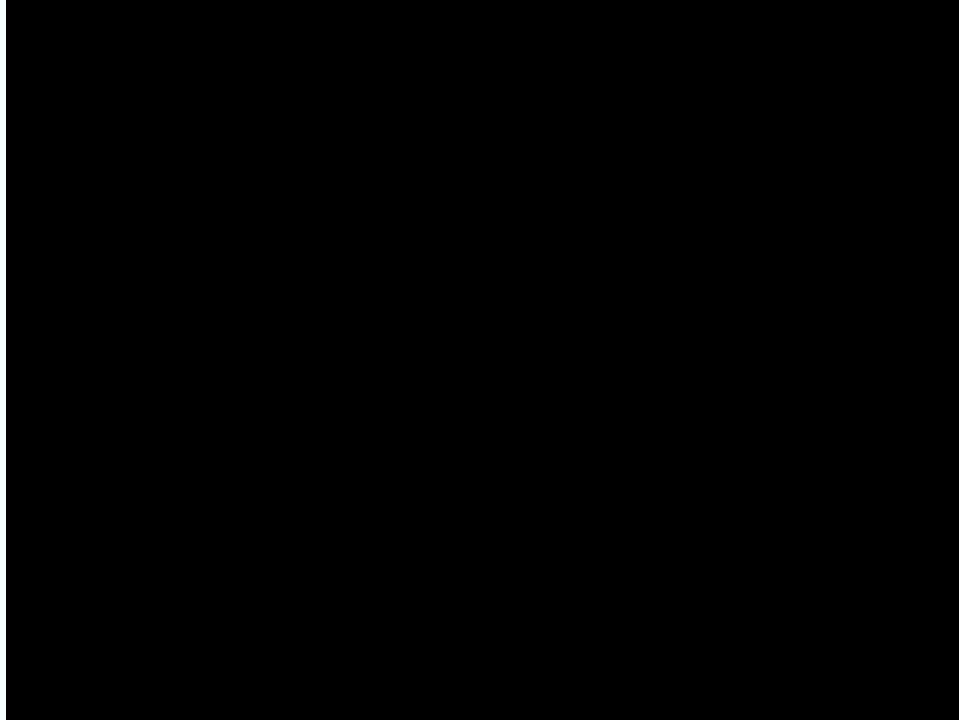


Websites and Games!

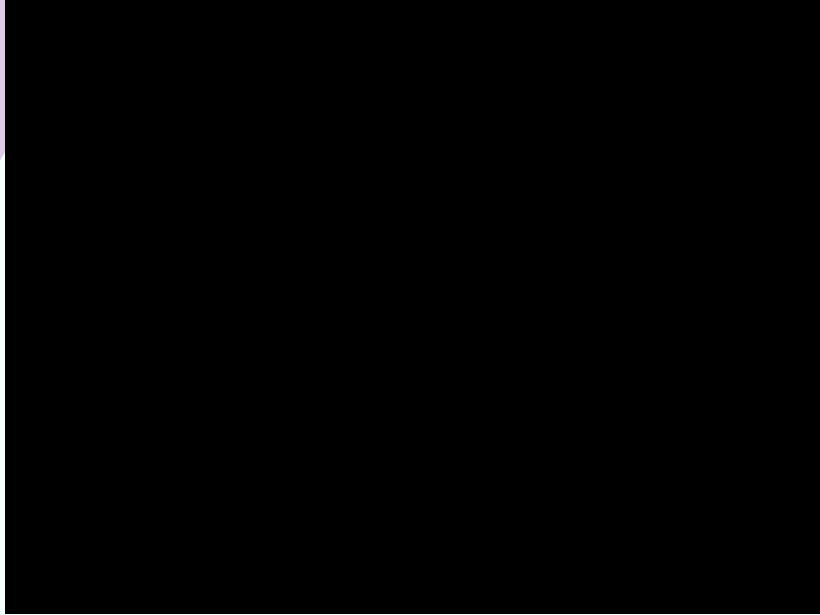
Tar Heel Reader
Tar Heel Game Play
The Apogee project



Cause Effect



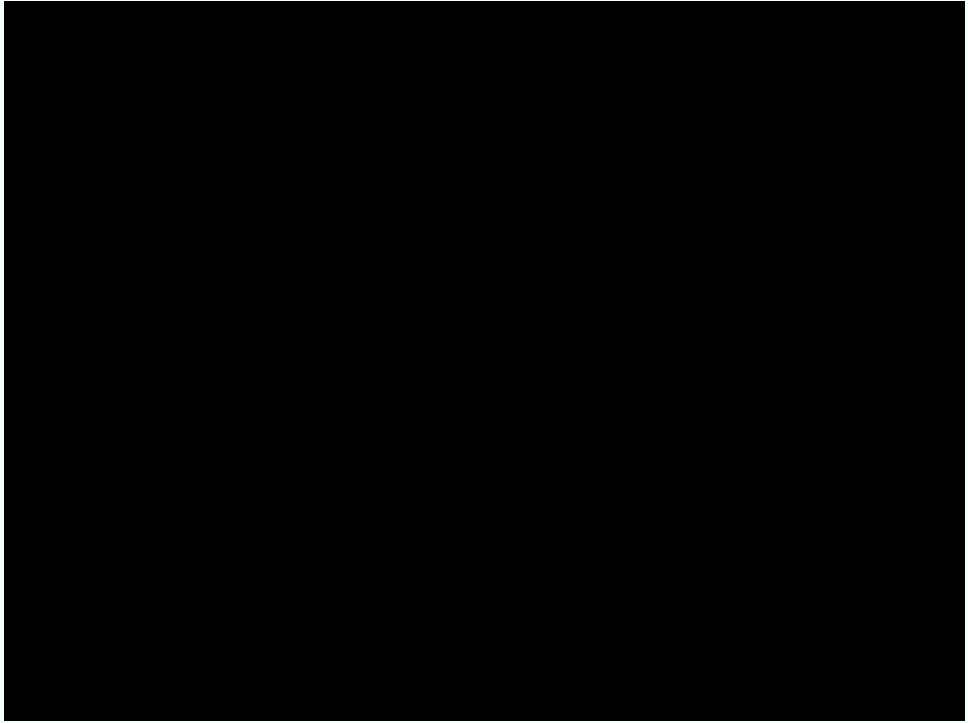
Participation



Social Skills



Putting it all together

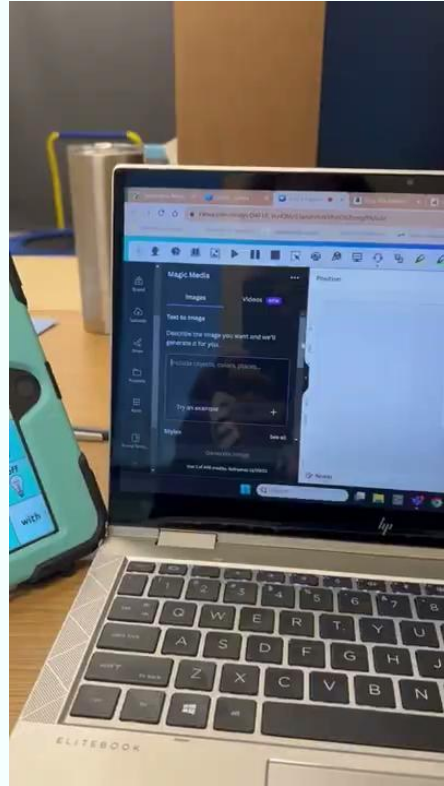


Social connection

<https://ifaketextmessage.com/>



Using AI



Opportunities for communication



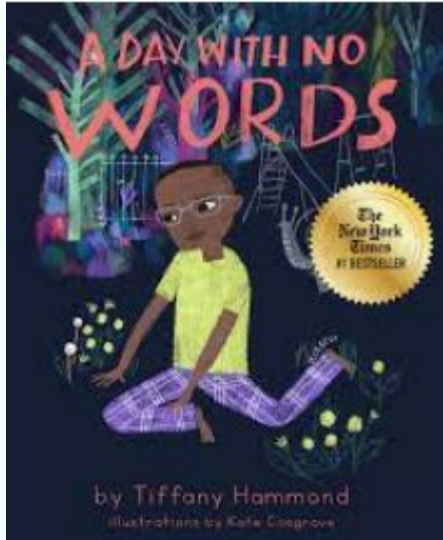
- **Preschool:** Lots of opportunities for social communication.
 - Easy to find opportunities.
- **Elementary:** Limited opportunities for communication.
 - Focus is on “sit and get” language skills
- **Middle/High school:** More opportunities for social communication
 - Life skills and community outings

Training peers

- There's power in peers!
- Peer inclusion!
- Peer trainings!
 - Story
 - Videos from siblings
 - Time to explore the devices



Tools for peer trainings



- Read books!
- Show videos of different modes of communicating.
- Create interviews with AAC users and their siblings.

Training adults



- Teacher and TA trainings!
 - Give a challenge!
 - Show real life examples.
- Parent training!
 - Parents need to hear from other parents.

Understanding the purpose of AAC

the imparting or
exchanging of
information or news

The Goal of AAC: Autonomous Communication

"Being able to say what I
want to say, to whoever I
want to say it to, whenever I
want to say it, however I
choose to say it."



-Gayle Porter
Speech-Language Pathologist
Developer of PODD

@the.aac.coach

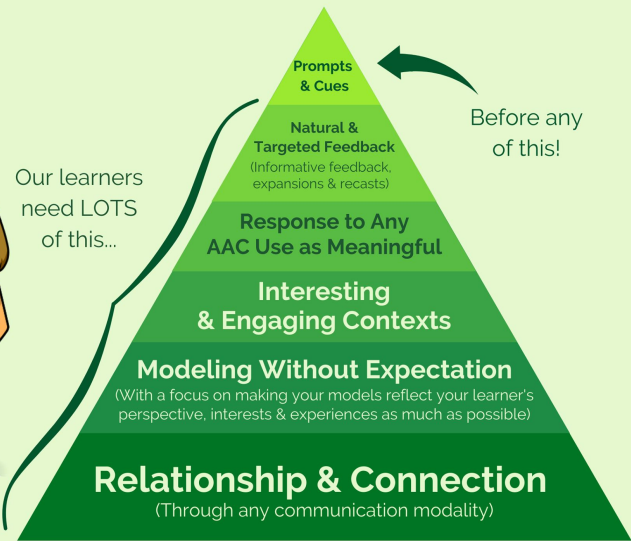


Prompt Hierarchy

Emergent AAC: Hierarchy of Learning Needs



Our learners need LOTS of this...



AAC Prompting Hierarchy (From Positive AACtion - Rocky Bay 2010; Senner 2010; YAACK 1999)

1	Expectant Pause	Give the child time to respond or the opportunity to initiate communication.
2	Indirect Nonverbal Prompt	Use your body language to indicate to the child that something is expected (e.g. expectant facial expression, questioning hand motion with a shrug, etc).
3	Indirect Verbal Prompt	Use an open-ended question that tells the child that something is expected but nothing too specific (e.g. "Now what?", "What should we do next?").
4	Request a Response	If there is still no response, you can try to direct the child more specifically (e.g. "Tell me what you want." "You need to ask me.").
5	Gestural Cue	You can point to the symbol or leave/tap your finger there for several seconds to get the child started with his message.
6	Partial Verbal Prompt	If there is still no response, give them part of the expected response (e.g. "You went to the...").
7	Direct Model	If still no response, model on the student's device (e.g. "The bear is sad."). Pause and wait for the child to imitate or respond.
8	Physical Assistant	Provide hand-over-hand assistance to help the child to form the message using their device.

Look for opportunities for authentic inclusion.



What's next?

- AAC Summer Camp!
- Better ways to reach families
- AT Certification and ATP for more evals
- Full time AAC Specialist position



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*Images from LessonPix and Drawn to AAC.

Thank you for coming!



aac_to_the_core

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