




ABC's of AAC

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What is Communication?¹

- Communication is the transmission of meaning from one individual to another.




What is AAC?²

- “Augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) refers to an area of research, clinical, and educational practice. AAC involves attempts to study and when necessary compensate for temporary or permanent impairments, activity limitations, and participation restrictions of individuals with severe disorders of speech-language production and/or comprehension, including spoken and written modes of communication.”




What is AAC?³

- “Augmentative Communication... may be used to refer to an approach that is clearly an addition to natural speech and/or handwriting.... Alternative Communication... may be used to refer to an approach that is clearly a substitute for (or alternative to) natural speech and/or handwriting...”




What is AAC?⁴

- “At its most basic level, AAC is *anything* that helps a person communicate when traditional spoken or written forms of communication don't meet that person's needs.”



Who Uses AAC?

- The American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (1991) estimated that there were more than 2 million individuals in the United States who were unable to communicate using speech or had severe communication impairments.



Who Uses AAC?⁵

Congenital disorders resulting in severe communication impairments include:

- Cerebral Palsy (CP)
- Rett Syndrome
- Angelman Syndrome
- Autism
- Developmental Apraxia of Speech
- Down Syndrome

Acquired conditions include:

- Parkinson's Disease
- Spinal Cord Injury
- Multiple Sclerosis (MS)
- Laryngectomy (removal of larynx)
- Glossectomy (full or partial removal of tongue)
- Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS)
- Closed Head Injury or Trauma (TBI)
- Cerebral Vascular Accident (stroke)



Who Uses AAC?⁶

- “While we might think of AAC as only being beneficial to children who are functionally nonspeaking, clinically it has proven to be of great value to young children with emerging verbal skills as well as children learning English as a second language”



Aided & Unaided Communication¹

- Aided communication involves the use of any aid that is external to the body.
- Unaided communication, on the other hand, involves the use of the body only.



AAC Terminology¹

- AAC System - An integrated network of symbols, aids, strategies, and skills that a person uses to communicate.
- Dedicated Communication Device - An assistive communication device that has been specifically designed for communication.
- Voice Output Communication Aid (VOCA) - An assistive communication device that features electronically produced voice/speech.
- Speech Generating Device - New Medicare terminology for AAC technology.



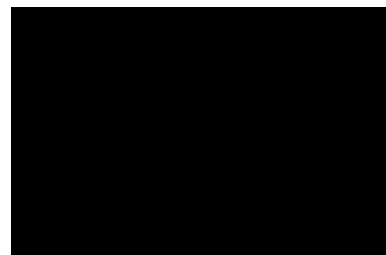
Modes of Communication

- We all use multiple modes of communication every day!

- Gestures
- Body Language
- Vocalizations
- Speech
- Facial Expression
- Pointing
- Symbols



Multimodal Communication

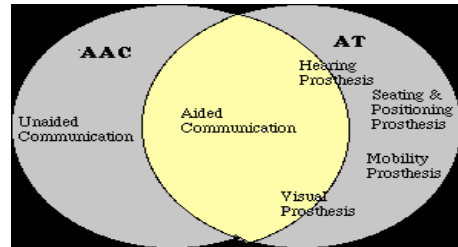


AAC or AT?

- Assistive Technology - (1) Any technology used to enable individuals to perform tasks that are difficult or impossible due to disabilities. (2) The field or area of development and provision of assistive technology.



AAC or AT?¹



Need for AAC

- Is the child's ability to speak meeting his needs in all environments?
- Is the child's inability to speak holding back language development?
- Could AAC facilitate development of speech and language?



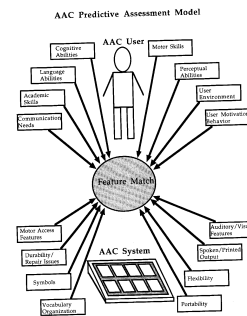
Device Selection

- There are hundreds of systems, devices and apps available. How do I pick one???



Technology Selection

- When conducting an augmentative and alternative communication assessment, a feature-matching process is conducted in which "The skills of the nonspeaking individual are matched to the features of a given AAC system." (Glennen & DeCoste, 1997, p. 153).



An AAC Typically Evaluation Includes

- Speech and Language Evaluation
- Motor (Accessing) Evaluation
- Technology Selection
- Trial Period with System



Loaner Devices

The Illinois Assistive Technology Program (ITAP) offers a wide variety of Assistive Technology (AT) for Illinois residents interested in borrowing a device for trial. Loan periods last 5 weeks and offer people the opportunity to try devices so that they may make educated decisions regarding AT.

<http://www.iltech.org/deviceloan.html>



Prerequisites for AAC⁸

- “There are no prerequisites to use AAC. The currently accepted evidence in the literature suggests that no specific skills are prerequisite for successful use of AAC in the broadest sense. AAC is an intervention approach that can be the beginning of communication development for an individual.”
- Everybody can communicate!

<http://www.asha.org/NIC/faqs-aac-basics.htm>



Device Funding

- Devices can be expensive. What funding resources are available???



Funding

- As of January 1, 2001, **Medicare** has covered and provided reimbursement for some Speech Generating Devices or "SGDs".
- **Illinois Department of Healthcare and Family Services** funds AAC systems for eligible individuals.
- Illinois has a loan program specifically for people with disabilities. The **ILoan Program** (Illinois Loans for Independent Living) makes loans to purchase assistive technology for daily living.
- **Private Insurance.**
- In 1990, IDEA was amended to mandate that **schools** consider each student's need for assistive technology devices and/or services during the IEP process (Chambers, 1997). School districts are required under law to provide appropriate AT to students with disabilities when it supports their acquisition of a free and appropriate public education (FAPE).




AAC and Speech

- I want my child to speak... Should I wait?



AAC & Natural Speech¹

- “It is now known that AAC does not inhibit the development of speech. In fact, in some individuals with a variety of disorders including aphasia, apraxia, dysarthria, autism, and cognitive impairment, AAC has been shown to actually facilitate the development of speech.”




Why Does AAC Facilitate Speech?⁷

- Scaffolding
- Increased Communicative Success
- Reduced Communicative Frustration
- Elicitation of Caregiver Response
- Increased Control Over Topic
- Making Language Visible




AAC and Natural Speech⁵

- “Today, professionals realize that AAC strategies can provide children who have developmental delays with an immediate means of communication; can facilitate expressive and receptive language development until other communication modalities improve (i.e., speech); and can serve as a bridge to future spoken language development.”

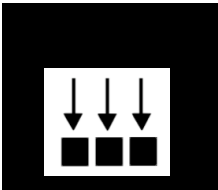


Learning AAC


- Once my child gets a device, what can I expect?



Learning AAC




- Simply giving a child a board or device does not make him/her a communicator...
- It is unrealistic to expect a child to spontaneously begin using an AAC system from the first day (s)he receives it.
- We have the benefit of being able to read the words on a child's board. Look at the symbol to the left- Do you know what this means?



Learning AAC - Goossens' (2000)⁹

Back	WTE	FLOR
Blott	DEA	WIMPS
LETM	Dktr	Lou!

- “...We must begin to view AAC training as being analogous to second language learning.”



Second Language Acquisition

- Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) - 2-3 years to achieve proficiency (*in a supportive environment*)
- Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) - 5-7 years to achieve



References

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- 9 Goossens' (2000). Facilitation Skills for Engineered Classrooms. Presented at AAC in the Mountains. Park City, UT.

