



Putting AAC into Practice:  
Developing FUNCTIONAL Communication

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What is Communication?



Can you imagine?  
Imagine that you have no means of communication.



How do we wait to...



What would you want to say....

- 10 words
- 20 words
- Which ones...



Language is the foundation of communication and expression and in order for it to be truly useful, language must have a framework and structure. Language is much more than a random collection of words and phrases. The language framework used on an AAC device should be appropriate for the communicator, meaningful to the recipient and relevant to the environment within which the communication is occurring.

## Communication begins with

Interaction



Communication

The capacity to communicate with others is at the heart of human experience. We use language, thought, feelings, creativity and movement to let others know about ourselves. Through that communication, we also develop our capacity to understand others.



## What are the facts....

- Over 2 million Americans with significant communication disabilities struggle daily to utilize communication
- We need to consider what and how we develop a function communication system



## Individuals who can not communicate effectively...

- Communicate through their behavior what they are not able to explain with words.
- Burden of communication is placed on the communication partner.
  - Find the hidden meaning in the behavior
  - Respond appropriately
  - Teach a more socially acceptable way of communicating
  - Providing an alternative way for them to let us know what the problem behavior is communicating



## Typical Development

- Receptive language develops before expressive
- With AAC we need to develop receptive and expressive skills simultaneously



## What do we need to communicate.

- Enjoyable interaction
- Reason
- Way to communicate



## AAC

- Barriers to communication
  - Assessment
  - Understanding the device/system
  - Access
  - Opportunities
  - Teaching new language
  - Functional use
  - Person's perspective
    - Attitudes
    - Climate
    - Cultural Perspectives
  - Educational level
  - Funding



## Breaking down the barriers



## Technology is not enough...

- Teach the use of the system
- Build opportunities
- Make it functional
- Teach what is important to the child
- Don't over prompt



Using speech generating devices to communicate during play

## How to make it work...

- Model the use of the technology to enhance communication
- Encourage it's use
- Set up for success
- Teach Initiation!



## Goal of Augmenting Communication Skills

- "To enable individuals to efficiently and effectively engage in a variety of communication interactions and participate in activities of their choice"
- Beukelman and Mirenda, 2005*

This may or may not involve a communication device

## Functional Categories of Communication Interaction

(Light, 1988)

- Expression of basic wants and needs  
"I want a drink"
- Information transfer  
"I have a dog"
- Social Closeness  
"Hi Joe, can you play?"
- Social Etiquette  
"Thank you"

## Start Early

- Emerging communications can often benefit from specific training in AAC methods. This may include:
  - Parent training to recognize and respond to nonverbal communication signals
  - Parent training to increase communication opportunities
  - Symbol training
  - Use of basic AAC methods to encourage functional communication skills

## What we know... Myth or Fact

**Myth** **Fact**

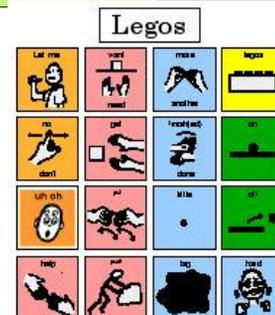
- The introduction of AAC reduces the motivation to work on speech.
- The use of AAC correlates with the improvement of natural speech... even in situations where no speech therapy has been given.

## Prioritizing Activities for initial training

- Functional Activities
- Frequently occurring activities
- Motivating Activities
- Age-Appropriate Activities
- Multiple environments

## When do we teach...

- Build on natural occurring activities.
- Throughout the day
- Utilize the AAC for a functional purpose
- Choose appropriate message set vocabulary





## How do we teach...

- Offer choices-where, when, what...
- Demonstrate choice making (aided language approach)
- Utilize "creative stupidity" violate rules, make items inaccessible



## Looking at building communication

1. Identifying and prioritizing activities for activity-based curriculum
2. Generating interactive scripts
3. Creating communication overlay/programming the device
4. Making overlays and devices readily accessible within the training environment
5. Training Spontaneous, Interactive Communication

## What we know... Myth or Fact

**Myth**

**Fact**

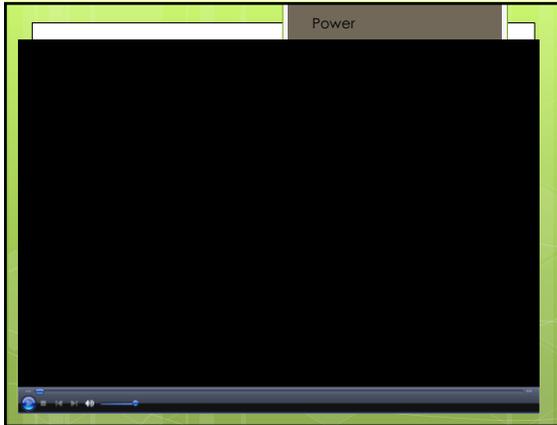
- AAC should only be considered after giving up all hope of natural speech
- Children with severe communication deficits who receive only therapy focusing on speech, endure years without an effective communication system.

## Identify activities conducive to interactive communication

- Two or more interacting participants
- Action organized around a mutual goal and/or shared materials
- Look at four areas for communication:
  - Domestic living activities
  - Vocational Training
  - Leisure/Recreational
  - Community Living Activities

## Prioritizing activities for initial training

- Functional Activities
- Frequently occurring activities
- Motivating Activities
- Age-Appropriate Activities
- Powerful language

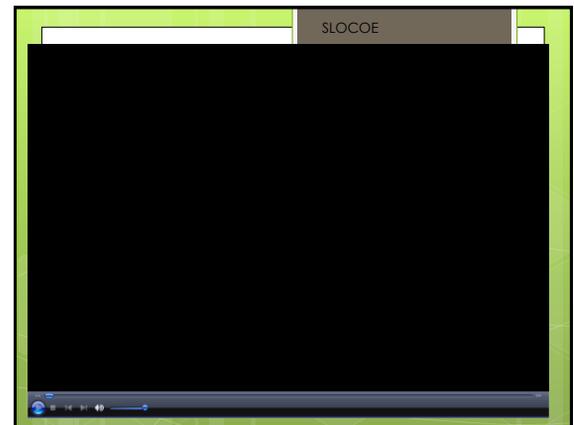


### Generating Interactive Scripts

- Develop the expressive language content for the conversation (message Set)
- The language that you and the student will use during the activity
- Plan ahead so you can continue to build higher language forms

### Generating Activity-Based Scripts

- Generate Activities Conducive to Interactive Communication
- Develop Interactive Scripts
  - Roles
  - Props
  - Sequence
- Steps
  - Roles of the participants
  - What will you be doing
  - Actions in the sequence
  - Generate related messages
- Select key concepts
- Develop Communication system for the activity



### Finding the words

- Depends on the communication device
- Know what language is programmed
- Build/individualize language
- Program
- Create

### Create visual reminders

- Use cue cards
- Teach this new language visually
- Use the device for two way conversations
  - PMII- Peer Mediated Instruction and Intervention

## Training Spontaneous Interactive Communication

- Set the stage for communication
- Predetermine
- Give opportunities to communicate
- Prompts if needed/ model what language looks like (aided language/Simultaneous approach)
- Sabotage Routines
- Use Creative Stupidity

## Train your communication partners

- Establish the role... it is not to drive the communication
- AAC naturally slows the pace of communication... prepare the audience
- Help them learn to read nonverbal cues
- Don't rescue the AAC user... Allow them to communicate

## What types of interactions should we look at...



Request an item

Receive the item

## Question-driven communication

- Do you want some apple?... yes/no
- What do you want?... apple
- Do you want an apple or cookie?... cookie
- What should I do?... Stir

## Statement-driven communication

- UH-Oh...Gone (point to empty plate) your Cookie is Gone.... (pause)... I've got more ... More COOKIE... (pause) ...and MORE APPLE... (pause) ... Just let me know. .... I want more cookie

## Activity-based communication... Functional environments

- Academic
- Snack
- Lunch
- Music
- Body Parts
- Arts and Crafts
- Noun verb sentences
- Fast food
- Community
- Story books
- Cooking
- Leisure activities
- Movie choices
- Playground
- Chores
- Job related items
- Dressing

### Product or Process based...



### Creating on the fly

- Have Materials Ready
- Be prepared for unexpected change
- What do you need to make it happen-planned and unplanned



### The Wild West



### AAC Summer Academy 2012

Diagnostic Center,  
Central California