



ECHO Didactic

AAC System Access and Use

Penny Tonn, M.S., CCC-SLP



No relevant financial disclosures.

Overview

- AAC definition and overview
- AAC Modalities
- Using AAC systems in complex behavior
 - * *Accessing AAC systems*

AAC Overview

Augmentative and Alternative Communication

- What is AAC?
 - External tools to substitute or supplement speech for individuals whose expressive language needs cannot be met through spoken means
- AAC can be a bridge to increasing verbal communication skills
 - Multimodal input=multimodal output
 - See the pictures/symbols
 - Move the body to make a request
 - Hear the adult model the word/words
 - Experience using the item
- ★ Responding to and acknowledging multimodal communication allows a communicator to participate socially thereby increasing their use of intentional communication with others
- ★ AAC leads to improved understanding of vocabulary and use of language
- ★ **AAC can be used situationally. AAC is not just for nonspeaking communicators!**

A note on AAC....

AAC is for anyone whose communication needs cannot be met by spoken means.

***Early communicators are learning to use gesture, eye contact, and vocalizations to indicate their wants/needs. Teaching symbolic forms of communication is important to supporting communication and participation.**

Communicators with social, sensory, and behavioral considerations need support to effectively learn and use these strategies. With support, modeling, and reinforcement of these forms of communication an individual will learn more modalities to communicate.

AAC is an effective tool to support communication skills, regardless of if an individual uses spoken word! “Readiness” for AAC is not contingent on specific factors.

No Tech Examples

Sign Language



Facial Expressions +
Eye Contact



Gesture

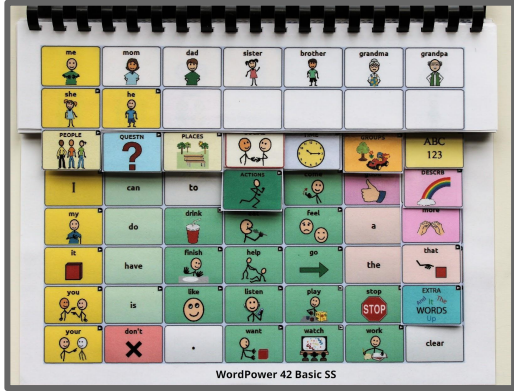


Low Tech/Print Based Examples

PECS



Core Vocabulary
Communication Board



Dynamic Picture
Display Books
(PODD)



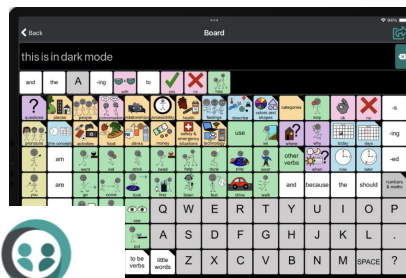
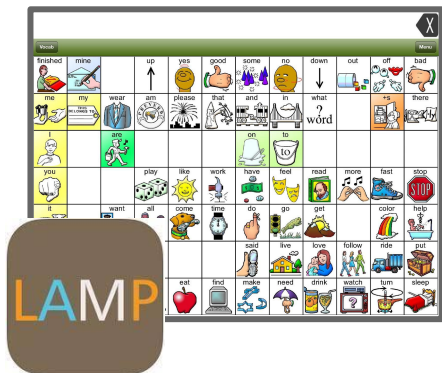
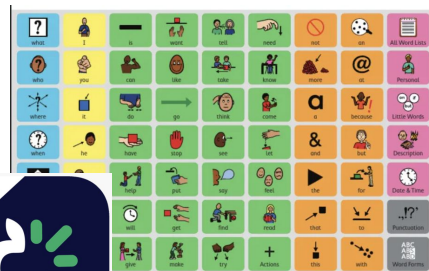
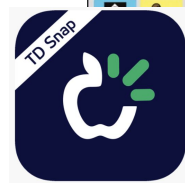
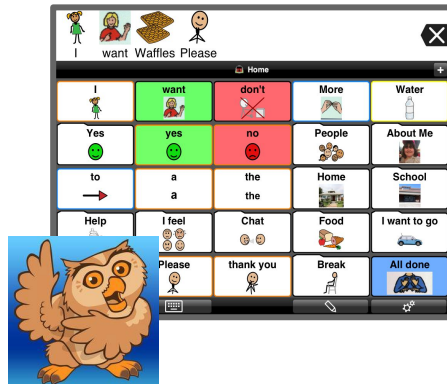
Additional Gesture
Based Systems



Additional Resources for Accessing Print Based Systems

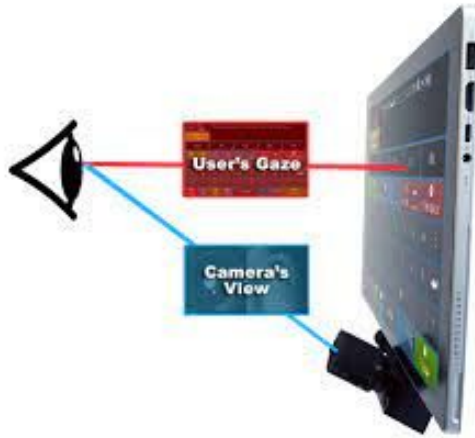
- **Lesson Pix**- paid subscription to online symbol systems including specific and personally salient words, vocabulary boards/grids, and visual schedules
 - <https://www.lessonpix.com/>
- **Do2Learn**: free symbol cards for basic communicative needs (e.g., food items, leisure activities/items, hygiene) and visual supports for daily routines
- **Aragonese Center of Augmentative and Alternative Communication**- Online symbols with search features; are completing translations of symbols/words in multiple languages (in process)
 - <https://arasaac.org/>
- **Saltillo Communication Boards**: printable core vocabulary communication boards
 - <https://saltillo.com/chatcorner/content/29>
- **AssistiveWare**: Based on Proloquo2Go symbols and grid layouts; Activity specific communication boards with core vocabulary and specific vocabulary symbols
 - <https://www.assistiveware.com/learn-aac/quick-communication-boards>
- **AAC Community Resources**- symbols from the program Boardmaker with activity specific words; Wide variety of vocabulary
 - <https://aaccommunity.net/2018/11/communication-boards/>

iPad Program Examples



Additional Systems and Access Methods

Eye Gaze Systems



Switch Systems



Where to start?

Developing Communicative Intent

- Notice eye contact, gesture use, and vocalizations
 - What can the communicator do? What does the communicatee need to do to communicate more effectively? What is a high stakes communication context vs a low stakes context?**
- Create motivation and social engagement/participation around their interests. Get the communicator's "buy in" with the device.
 - Give the communicator a reason to communicate!**

AAC and Complex Behavior

- Behavior is communicative!
 - A goal of modifying behavior is replacing an unconventional means of communication (e.g., throwing items, kicking, hitting, etc.) with a conventional means (e.g., using speech, sign, pictures, or speech generating devices)
-
- Teaching use of AAC requires supportive and responsive communication partners:
 - Noncontingent modeling for a variety of pragmatic functions and vocabulary, both core and fringe vocabulary
 - Acceptance and acknowledgement of the learner's current communication modality
 - Use of AAC as antecedent strategy
 - Modeling across settings, contexts, and communication partners

Remember... communication is about people NOT devices.

- Choice of device should consider user's abilities
- AAC is not MAGIC! Communication must be taught!
- Familiarize yourself with the learner's device.

MODEL! MODEL! MODEL!

Acquiring High Tech AAC Systems

1. AAC Evaluation and insurance funding
2. Grants through Ben's Fund
3. Loan systems
4. School provision of SGD

SGD Funding through Insurance

Coverage can vary by insurer

Coverage must include durable medical equipment

Medical vs. Therapeutic purposes

Check with insurance provider for explanation of coverage on devices

Required team members:

1. Speech language pathologist
<https://nwacs.info/aac-provider-directory/>
2. Medical provider/prescriber (e.g., MD, DO, ARNP)
3. Patient

Other possible team members:

1. Family/guardian/caregiver
2. Occupational therapist
3. Physical therapist
4. Teacher
5. Rehabilitation counselor

SGD Funding through Insurance

Process:

1. Complete a benefits check
2. Evaluation conducted by SLP
3. Submit evaluation report to a funding source
 - a. <https://www.aacfunding.com/>
 - b. <https://www.ablenetinc.com/>
 - c. <https://www.forbesaac.com/funding>
4. Physician prescription of speech generating device
5. Approval from insurance
6. Release of a device to the family
(Families can request a case manager with their insurance as needed)

Resource: <http://www.aacfundinghelp.com/>

AT Loan Programs

Device Loaning Programs

- **Washington Assistive Technology Act Program (WATAP)**
 - Device loan programs
 - Demonstrations and hands-on guidance
 - Equipment sharing and classifieds

<http://watap.org/>
- **Forbes AAC**
 - AAC device funding, device trials, device demonstrations

<https://www.forbesaac.com/try-a-device-aac>

Financial Loans for AT

- **Northwest Access Fund**
 - Financial support for AT evaluations, devices, and adaptive equipment

<http://www.nwaccessfund.org/assistive-technology-loans/>