Augmentative and Alternative Communication: Assessing Needs and Aligning Supports for Students

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AAA Systems
Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) Systems
• Augment - Add to or clarify the message
• Alternative Communication - Different method used for message
• The goal is functional communication that can be understood by others

AAA Systems
Systems may be
• Aided (e.g., use a device or tool)
• Unaided (e.g., gesture, sign language)

Various Levels of technology
• No Tech (ex., gesture or sign language)
• Low Tech (ex., switch or picture cards)
• High Tech (ex., text to speech software)

2013 AAC Survey
• Data was collected from across Virginia
• 555 respondents
• >75% had 1 or more students who were unable to communicate verbally

Results of the survey
• 80% are interested in training
• 81.6% want training within the division
• 49% want training in “prerequisite skills”

There are NO prerequisite skills required to offer support students with complex communication needs.
Providers Reported
• Differences between selection of devices and teaching use of devices
• Increased comfort level with low and mid tech systems
• Increased willingness to seek support for mid and high tech systems

Simulating Complex Communication Needs
Communicate your answer to the question without using spoken words, writing, or signs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Preferred food</th>
<th>Non-preferred food</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Facial expression</td>
<td>Smiley</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head nod</td>
<td>Nod &quot;yes&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gesture</td>
<td>Rub stomach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noise</td>
<td>&quot;mmmm&quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

How do you feel about eating brussel sprouts?

How did you make your feelings known?

Acknowledge Alternate Forms of Communication
• Physically moving/ giving objects
• Pointing / showing
• Eye gaze
• Head nod
• Facial expressions
• Self injurious behavior
• Tantrum / Crying
• Noises / verbal approximations

AAC Supports and Resources
1. Virginia Department of Education and Training & Technical Assistance Centers (TTACs)
2. Local Education Agency (LEA)
3. VCU Autism Center for Excellence
   • Access to:
     - Knowledgeable Staff
     - Forms and Guidance
     - AAC Devices
Title II of ADA
- Effective Communication is a civil right
- Requirement for LEA to address communication needs
- Student may be:
  - Student with a §504 plan
  - Student with a disability under IDEA

Virginia Regulations
In developing each child's IEP, the IEP team shall consider:
- The academic, developmental, and functional needs of the child. (8VAC20-81-110 F 1 d)
- Consider the communication needs of the child (8VAC20-81-110 F 2 d)

Functional Communication Skills
- The ability to express:
  - Needs
  - Wants
  - Preferences
  - Feelings
- Communication that can be understood by others.

IEP Teams
- Should document discussion of consideration of communication needs
- Should document communication strengths and weaknesses
  - Intent and interaction
  - Methods
  - Comprehension
- May access training or supports as needed
Start with an Assessment
• Consider the individual student
• Use a team approach
• Consider a variety of
  – Data sources
  – Communication partners
  – Communication needs
  – Environments

Evaluation and Assessments
• Review existing data
• Determine if new data is required
• Secure permission and follow regulatory requirements for parental consent when gathering new data

SETT—Assessing Student’s Needs
• Student—what does the child need to be able to do that is currently difficult, other information related to the child (vision, hearing, sensory, movement)
• Environment—where does the child need to perform a skill or activity? What is the environment like? What adults and children are around?
• Task—what is the specific skill needed
• Tools—what adaptations, devices, special toys are needed for the child to perform the task

Consider Needs and Functioning

WATI
• Wisconsin Assistive Technology Initiative
• Free resources for assessment and implementation
• Assessing Students’ Needs for Assistive Technology (ASNAT) 5th Edition - complete version
WATI Student Information Guide
Process Forms

• The forms are taken directly from Chapter 1 of the ASNAT manual, 5th edition.

• The forms are posted in sections for easy downloading.

• Teams should always begin with the Referral section.

Consider a Communication Inventory

• Review current communication skills and behaviors

• Consider input from
  – various communication partners
  – various settings (e.g., 1:1, small and large group)
  – various activities (e.g., routine, novel, preferred)

Communication Inventory for Emerging Language Learners
https://vcuautismcenter.org/resources/communication.cfm

• Record existing data

• Look for trends

• Considers independent skills

• May be used to
  – Set targets
  – Identify strengths and issues

Includes Advanced Skills

• Asks for information

• Answers “wh” questions in the environment

• Tells a familiar story

• Comments or asks questions about
Additional Skills Demonstrated

• Follows one step directions
• Follows two step directions
• Follows instructions containing spatial concepts (i.e. in, on, under, over, etc.)
• Follows instructions containing sequencing concepts (i.e. first, next, last, etc.)
• Listens while another person shows an item/ action
• Sits for ____ minutes while a story is being read (or listens to a lecture)

Develop Multiple Solutions

• Plan for multiple AAC solutions
• Utilize when situations change:
  – Environment (no power)
  – Task changes (no planning)
  – Communication partners (no training)

IMPLEMENTING AAC SYSTEMS

Develop Multiple Solutions

• Plan for multiple AAC solutions
• Utilize when situations change:
  – Environment (no power)
  – Task changes (no planning)
  – Communication partners (no training)

Implementing Systems

• Anticipate and schedule communication
  – Identify communication events
  – Identify partners for communication
• Train communication partners to:
  – Use the AAC systems
  – Allow ample wait time
• Provide ongoing support and modify as needed

Engineer the Environment

• Structure interactions to require communication
• Set up “communicative temptations” in the student’s routine
  – Delayed access: Preferred items or activities are present but out of reach and must be requested
  – Missing item: An item needed for a preferred activity is missing.
  – Delayed assistance: Needed assistance is delayed until s/he makes a request.
  – Wrong item: student is given the wrong items and must communicate to correct the mistake

Ongoing Consideration

• Continue to look for changes or trends in data
  – Use of the system
  – Student communication skills
  – Partners or environmental changes
  – Physical needs or other skills that may impact device use
SELECTING CLASSROOM STRATEGIES

Selecting Classroom Strategies
• Begin with student and classroom data
• Review all areas of need
• Consider communication partners

CONSIDER AREAS OF NEED

• Literacy and Numeracy
• Study/Organizational Skills
• Listening and Communication
• Activities of Daily Living
• Recreation, Leisure, & Adaptive Play
• Positioning, Seating & Mobility
• Computer Access
• Behavior and Transition

SETT FRAMEWORK

• SETT Scaffold for Consideration of AT Needs

REDUCING BARRIERS

WATI Supports
The supports section – Free materials contains many tools for the classroom such as
• D.E.S.K. (Designing Environments for Successful Kids)
• Hey! Can I Try That?
• School Profile of Assistive Technology Services
• Resources in Spanish
Consideration Process
• What are student’s current goals and objectives?
• What tasks are challenging to the student?
• What strategies are currently being used?
• Are the strategies working? Is the student making progress?
• Could assistive technology be required for the student to have success?

AAC in Classroom
• AAC In The Classroom For Students With Autism

54 Tips for Implementation
• 54 Tips And Tricks For Implementing Alternative And Augmentative Communication In The Classroom

Resources
• VDOE Assistive Technology Website
• VDOE E-Learning Modules
• TTAC Online ATSDP website (AAC tab)
• TTAC Online webshops
• VCU ACE Webshops
• VCU ACE Resources -> Communication

VDOE AT Webpage
http://www.doe.virginia.gov/special_ed-iep_instruct_svcs/assistive_technology/
• Links to
  – Assistive Technology: A Framework for Consideration and Assessment (PDF)
  – Assistive Technology Project
  – Accessible Instructional Materials Center of Virginia (AIM-VA)
  – National Instructional Materials Accessibility Standard (NIMAS)

Meeting the Needs of Children with Complex Communication Needs
• www.doe.virginia.gov
  – Special education
  – Technical Assistance and Professional Development
  – E-Learning
Other Resources

- http://ttaconline.org/atsdp
- AAC tab to locate tools and resources
- Collaborative Teaming for Support of Students Using AAC in Inclusion (Form)
- Helping the General Education Team Support Students Who Use AAC

TTACOnline Webshops

- SETTing the Stage for the Success of EVERY Student
- 50 Ways to Create Accessible Literacy Experiences with Everyday Technologies
- Aided Language Stimulation: An Essential Strategy for Teaching Language to AAC Users of Any Age

Thank you for participating!