



# AAC In The Self-Contained Classroom

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## How this session will work:

- Some foundational information
- Some demonstration
- Practice and reflection
- Video when we can

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## AAC Communication is NOT...

- Testing to see what you know
- Naming and identifying
- Just making choices
- Most of the school stuff we do

If I know what you are going to say, it is NOT communication.

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## AAC Communication is...

- Messy
- Everywhere all of the time
- About the PURPOSE of the message
- About relationships and connections
- FUN
- THE MOST IMPORTANT THING you can do




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## AAC?

Augmentative and Alternative Communication

–Augment = to help when the student’s speech is not understandable

–Alternative = when the student does not communicate through speech

•Can be for a variety of reasons

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## Who uses AAC?

How do the characteristics of an individual’s speech disability affect how you approach their therapy and implementation?

Let’s frame the discussion in terms of levels of communication independence.

But first.....

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## Research re: AAC Users

- They have significantly fewer opportunities for literacy experiences.
- These students are at risk of becoming passive communicators.
- They have fewer opportunities to ask questions, which is an important way children learn about their world.

From: CTG 2005 Binger, Kent and Walsh

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## Research re: AAC communication partners

- Take the majority of the conversational turns
- Provide fewer opportunities for communication
- Ask predominantly “Yes” and “No” questions
- Interrupt individuals using AAC
- Focus on the technology instead of the individual

From: CTG 2005 Binger, Kent and Walsh

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## Basic concepts for AAC Implementation

- Student’s initiation of communication is very often our primary goal.
  - remember the research
- Model, model, **model!**
- Respond to communication efforts
- Provide minimal levels of prompting
- The art of the “expectant wait”
- Keep it natural and throughout the day →




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## Why Model Model Model?

- Children hear hundreds of thousands of words before they begin to use speech.
- Picture symbols are not easy to recognize
- Children who use AAC may need to see a symbol *used* (i.e. *in context*) 300+ times before we can expect them to recognize it.



From Cathy Binger, NWACS October 2012

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## Some basic practical tips

- Don't create activities to practice AAC. Work AAC into whatever you do. Communication happens everywhere all day long. "See child, see system".\*
- Provide multiple opportunities throughout the day with a variety of partners. ([Tina Moreno's "Give Me 5"](#))
- Provide a lot of [language-rich activities](#) throughout your day
- Predictable formats and multiple repetitions are helpful.
- Celebrate small successes!!!

\* Paraphrased from Gayle Porter and Linda Burkhart – PODD.

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## Remember this...

"Communication is messy."  
(Gayle Porter and Linda Burkhart)

And

"Doing something, even if it isn't perfect, is infinitely better than doing nothing at all."  
([praacticalaac.org](#))

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## As we talk about systems...

We need to talk about levels of AAC communication independence.

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## Levels of Communication Independence - Definitions

Emergent  
Context Dependent  
Independent

From Dr. Patricia Dowden [http://depts.washington.edu/augcomm/03\\_cimodel/commind1\\_intro.htm](http://depts.washington.edu/augcomm/03_cimodel/commind1_intro.htm)

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## Emergent Communicators

- An "Emerging" communicator does not have a **RELIABLE** method of **EXPRESSIVE** communication through **SYMBOLIC** language
- Often very little experience with initiation
  - passivity
  - behaviors
- Don't assume lack of cognition
  - And don't over-interpret

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## Strategies specific to Emergent Communicators

Assume he has something to say.  
 Assume intention at first (but don't over interpret)  
 Honor multimodal communication  
 Building a **reliable** symbol set is critical  
 Need to represent [core vocabulary](#)  
 Need to *experience* core vocabulary  
 Building receptive symbol knowledge is as important as expressive use  
[\(and slide 10\)](#)

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## Utilize Multi-Modal System

Vocalizations  
 Gestures  
 Facial expression  
 Environmental context  
 Tangible symbols  
 Pictures (ask me about [TOBIs](#) ☺)  
 Picture communication symbols

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## Examples of AAC systems for Emergent Communicators

Low Tech – [PECS](#), [Quick words from PODD](#), [Core/Functional](#) Communication Board

Mid Tech – [Communication Skill Builder](#)

High Tech  
 iPad apps: [Go Talk Now](#), [Sounding Board](#)

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## 3 Minute Practice

Pair up

Take turns being the **emerging communicator** and communication partner.

Practice:

- model
- expectant wait
- assume “intention”

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## Reflections

What worked?

What didn't?

How did it feel to be the emergent communicator?

How did your activity support or not support this use of core vocabulary?

Can you think of other activities you do in your classrooms that would work for this strategy?

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## Context Dependent Communication

- Has **SYMBOLIC COMMUNICATION** that is **RELIABLE**, but it is limited to particular **CONTEXTS** or **PARTNERS**.
- Most of the students we work with.
- Often better at requesting and naming than commenting, greeting, asking questions, etc. because of our traditional methodology.
- Need to increase vocabulary often means a need to learn to navigate through a system.

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## The critical importance of Literacy

What separates Context Dependent communicators from Independent communicators is LITERACY.

SO START LITERACY WORK EARLY!!!!

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## Strategies Specific to Context Dependent Communicators

Basic implementation strategies apply ([slide #10](#))  
Select vocabulary and think of activities based on varied purposes of communication, not just labeling and requesting.

Use The System Throughout The Day!!!

Follow the student's language development, i.e. use complete sentences, but **model** just above the child's developmental level. (When in doubt, ask your SLP :-)

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## The Basic 4

Core Vocabulary	Fringe Vocabulary
Control Vocabulary	Social

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### Examples of AAC systems for Context Dependent Communicators

Low Tech: [Communication Book](#) (e.g. [PODD](#))  
Use Communication Boards for specific activities, but only as part of a complete, multi-modal system, e.g. guided reading, cooking, crafts, games.

Mid Tech – Static Display like Comm Skill Builder or [Tech Speak](#)

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### Examples of AAC systems for Context Dependent Communicators

High Tech:  
[iPad apps](#) like  
SonoFlex, Proloquo2Go,  
Clicker Communicator, LAMP,  
Compass  
TouchChat HD (with Word  
Power ©)  
[Dedicated AAC systems](#) like Tobii,  
Dynavox, Accent, NovaChat



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### These systems require Navigation

It's all about the patterns,  
developed over time.  
Model Model Model!  
Talk about the navigation.  
Give plenty of  
opportunities.  
Use in different contexts.



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**You WILL be tempted to simplify the system...**

You will think that the system is too visually “busy” and distracting and overwhelming.  
You can simplify some systems, and you can start out that way, BUT  
When you model, YOU will quickly run out of things to say – and –  
Students learn locations and motor patterns become more automatic than symbols.

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**Let’s look at some more examples**

Video  
    individual  
    classroom  
Look Fors... Navigation, differing voice, expectant wait, open-ended questions.

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**Language Rich Activities**

- Shared reading
- Telling Our Stories
- writing
- Poetry writing
- Games like Heads Up and Hedbanz
- Newspapers like News-2-You \*\*
- Surveys and Interviews
- Jeopardy games
- Treasure hunts
- MATH!! (It’s a language activity ☺)
- Tuned into Learning\*\*



\*\* Utilize multi-media and predictable format

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### 3 minute Practice

Get in pairs or groups of 3.

Play "I'm going to the \_\_\_ to buy a \_\_\_"

Practice:

- model
- expectant wait
- verbalize navigation

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### Reflections

What worked?

What didn't?

How did it feel to be the context dependent communicator?

Did your activity cover a variety of communication purposes?

Can you think of other activities you do in your classrooms that would work for this strategy?

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### Independent Communication

- Can communicate anything to anyone on any topic.
- Requires spelling/literacy skills
- Strategies are often around speed of communication
- Multi-modal is just as important at this level

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## Examples of AAC systems for Independent Communicators

### Low Tech:

Alphabet boards and context boards

Situation-specific boards

### High Tech:

iPad apps: Proloquo2Go, TouchChat HD

w/Word Power, LAMP, Compass

Dedicated AAC systems

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## Let's look at some examples

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ozoPJnHEkCM&list=PL5Ty2F6P1qokjPDt7gGWIVyjc7spX83TG&index=5>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aVSGxiHhvcY&list=PL5Ty2F6P1qokjPDt7gGWIVyjc7spX83TG&index=6>

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## 3 Minute Practice

Pair up

Use the alphabet board to discuss your plans for the weekend.

Think of strategies toward efficient communication that still allow the communicator to be in control (e.g. guessing after a certain number of letters)

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## Alternative Access

### Direct Selection

- Pointing/Touching
- Eyegaze
- Mouse
- Head mouse
- Joystick or adapted mouse

### Scanning

- Partner assisted
- Auto Scan
- Step Scan

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## Reflections from today

How will your experience from this class be reflected in your work?

Which systems do you need more information about for your current students?

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## Where to go from here?

<https://aaclanguagelab.com/resources/free>

-Sample lesson plans, activities, etc. from PRC.

<http://www.dynavotech.com/implementation-toolkit/learning-paths/list/?id=6>

-video/print resources for teaching vocabulary/strategies from Tobii Dynavox

<http://www.lburkhart.com/podd.htm>

-Information about PODD including tips and tricks for making PODD books.

<https://www.specialedtechcenter.org/>

-Lending library (AAC systems, etc.), free webinars, consultation...

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## More resources

<http://www.autisminternetmodules.org/>

-lots of free modules (most 1-2 hours long) on a variety of topics such as: prompting, communication, visual supports, etc.

<http://praacticalaac.org/>

-sign up for weekly emails or visit site for videos, "strategy of the month," and much more.

<http://praacticalaac.org/practical/fresh-look-aac-in-the-classroom-with-joan-bruno/>

<http://praacticalaac.org/practical/how-i-do-it-classroom-support-for-students-with-aac-needs-by-tina-moreno/>

<http://depts.washington.edu/augcomm/index.htm>

-More information about continuum of communication independence, selecting vocabulary, and system features from Pat Dowden at UW.

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## Thank you!!!

For the work that you do,

For supporting students with the greatest challenges,

For continuing to seek out new information!!

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## Contact me or SETC

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