Pushing Into the Preschool Classroom to Support Young Learners Who are Nonverbal or Minimally Verbal

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Kim
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Carole
Financial: Co-author/editor
Non-financial: Owner of educational blog (PrAACtical AAC)

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Plan for this Session

Kim
• Nature and characteristics of young AAC learners at the emergent and context-dependent levels
• Using supportive interaction styles

Carole
• Supporting AAC use in lessons, activities, and routines
• Accessing free/low cost AAC materials
CHARACTERISTICS OF YOUNG AAC LEARNERS

Their AAC tools should reflect that diversity.

Our young AAC communicators are a diverse group.

Emergent
- Do not use symbols to express themselves in a reliable way

Context-dependent
- Regularly uses symbols to express themselves, Limited in scope

Independent
- Communicates on any topic, in a variety of settings, & w/ various partners

Their AAC tools should reflect that diversity.
AAC Options for the Emergent Communicator

- Non-symbolic interactions
- Idiosyncratic gestures
- Key word signing
- Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS; 'No tech' or app)
- Pragmatically Organized Dynamic Display (PODD)
- SGDs or AAC apps with:
  - Grid displays
  - Visual Scene Displays

Visual Scenes (hybrid)

- I want to sing.
- Let's read a book.
- Kiss friends good-night.

AAC Options for the Context-dependent Communicator (Too many to list!)
Supporting AAC Use in the Classroom

Supportive Strategies

- AAC near me
  - Focus on partner learning
- Interaction skills (AAC facilitation skills)
  - Aided language input (AAC modeling)
  - Creating frequent opportunities for expression
  - Sufficient pause time
  - "Be the fun" (Engaging tone)
  - Descriptive talking (non-confrontational style)
  - Informative feedback
- Individualized AAC systems
  - Based on child strengths, needs, and priorities
  - AAC is not a one-size-fits-all venture.

AAC NEAR ME
FOCUS ON PARTNER LEARNING

Focus on Partners
- Listen
- Start Small
- Show Rather than Tell
- Develop Materials for Partners

Listen
Start Small
Show Rather than Tell
Develop Materials for Partners
Engage the child in fun, meaningful interactions

- Follow child’s lead
- Turn-taking – songs, games, play with toys
- Imitation – mirror child’s play and sounds
- Establishing joint attention – use gestures and pointing to comment, draw attention
- Take focus off of talking
Teach AAC Facilitation Skills

- Aided language input (AAC modeling)
- Creating frequent opportunities for expression
- Sufficient pause time
- "Be the fun" (Engaging tone)
- Descriptive talking (Non-directive style)
- Informative feedback

Erin using Aided Language Input - Free Play

Model & Teach Pause and Wait

Each time you make a comment or ask a child a question:
- Look at the child expectantly.
- Pause and give the child the opportunity to communicate.
- Wait at least 5-10 seconds.

Why?
- Indicates that the child is expected to communicate
- Provides additional time for the child to understand what is said and/or formulate a message
What are AAC needs of each student?
**Adult-directed (Classroom Staff)**

- Collaboration & planning
  - Example: Circle Time
  - What's the participation plan? (Implications for vocabulary)
  - How can we address student's AAC goals?
- Modeling AAC partner skills
- Supporting the AAC student
- Access to AAC tools
- Operational competence

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**Questions to Guide the Planning Process**

- **What is the skill?**
- **When are we teaching it?**
- **When are we practicing it?**

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**Sample Activity-Objectives Matrix**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goals</th>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>Date:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Speech</td>
<td>Social</td>
<td>Art</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artic</td>
<td>Vocal play</td>
<td>Engage</td>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Arvita</td>
<td>Morning</td>
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<tr>
<td>Goal</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Make choices</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Read object/ions</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Request object/ions</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counterpart</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appropriate actions</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sequence personal narrative</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use core words to answer Hil question</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
“Who has time for this?!”

“Do I really have to do this kind of planning?

• *It depends.*
  • Is the student making sufficient progress?
  • Are you satisfied with the collaboration process?
**Child-led Activities**

- Generally unstructured
- Great for reluctant communicators & children who struggle with joint attention & engagement
- Follow the child's lead with parallel play, self-talk, think aloud, aided language input, descriptive talking
- Minimal demands at first, Gradually introduce reciprocal interaction
- EARLY ON: Offer things they like
- LATER: Controlled access

**SLP-led Activities**

**Advantages**

- Gives the SLP more control to design the activities
- Aligned with student goals
- Activity Routines: Can add structure and predictability that promote student participation and engagement
- Develop a nucleus of activities and grow the materials over time
- SLP becomes increasingly comfortable and can focus more on instructional strategies

**Developing Activity Routines**

- High level of predictability
- Balance SLP-led activities with student choice & autonomy
- Clear beginning/end
- Planned opportunities for AAC use
- Visual supports (e.g., Activity Routine Schedule, Mini-schedule for some activities within the routine
- Start with a simple version, gradually add increase task difficulty
- Build a ‘template’ that works for YOU & your kids
**Activity Routine Elements**

1. Try to start & end the same way each time
2. Active participation for all students throughout
3. Engaging materials & interaction style
4. Use the magic of movement & music
5. Clear targets (e.g., joint attention, requesting, pre-stored messages, core vocabulary, 3-word utterances)
6. Be prepared to model AAC
7. Pre-planned elicitions

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**Routine: Free Play Pals**

- Puppet Pals Hello
- Toy choices
  - Pre-set: Follow the routine
  - Student-led: Child chooses toys
- Puppet Pals Goodbye

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**Puppet Pals Hello/Goodbye**

- Simple song structure
- Active involvement by students
  - Choose who to sing to
  - Slow the rate
  - Pause to elicit AAC use

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Games

Games with Rules
- Non-competitive to start
- "Off-label": Use the game materials but not their directions/rules

Sample Routine
1. Pick a game
2. Review the rules
3. Play the game
4. Talk about it

Bingo or Lotto

Game Time
Routine: Surprise Bag (Dress-up)

1. 'What's in the bag?' Song
2. Choose an item
   • Label it; Talk about it
   • Pick someone to put it on
   • Talk about it some more
3. Repeat Steps 1-2
4. Ending song

Routine: Surprise Bag (Cause & Effect Toys)

1. 'What's in the bag?' Song
2. Choose an item
   • Label it; Talk about it
   • Light it up, make music
   • Talk about it some more
3. Repeat Steps 1-2
4. Ending song

Book Talk Group
Activity Sequence
- Pre-reading activity
- Book of the Week
- Highlight key words &/or language targets
- Reading or picture walk
- Alphabet activity
- Writing activity
Mindy’s Schedule in the Tiger Sharks Classroom

- Mixed ability classroom w/ 4 students who use AAC
- Pushes in 4 days/week for a total of 1 hr 40 min
- 2 groups of 2 students

Monday
- 10:20-10:50
  - Free Play Pals w/ Olivia & Jesse

Tuesday
- 9:00-9:20
  - Book Talk Group w/ Eli & Shavonne

Wednesday
- 10:20-10:50
  - Mystery Bag w/ Olivia & Jesse

Thursday
- 9:00-9:20
  - Book Talk Group w/ Eli & Shavonne

“Where can I go for free or low-cost AAC therapy materials?”

Selected AAC Vendors
- AssistiveWare’s Core Word Classroom
  http://bit.ly/2DlaSVI
Selected AAC Vendors

- PRC’s AAC Language Lab (subscription): https://aaclanguagelab.com/
- Free resources: http://bit.ly/2JDmKlR

Selected AAC Vendors

- Saltillo
  - Chat Editor (Windows only): http://bit.ly/2JBgKgB

Selected AAC Vendors

- Speak for Yourself: http://bit.ly/2JC4g5h
Selected AAC Vendors

- Tobii-Dynavox
- Pathways: http://bit.ly/2JHuDqF

Other

- Project Core: http://bit.ly/2t5mByT

Tar Heel Reader (https://tarheelreader.org/)

- Books created by teachers, SLPs, parents, etc.
- Download as PPT or PDF
- Read online
  - Choice of 3 voices
  - Switch-accessible
- Create a free account to store favorites
“Our staff/families need training.”
“Where can I get AAC training materials?”

AAC-related Training Materials

Video-based

Staff Development: AAC Facilitation Skills

Materials for Your Training
  - 3 Modules: Power of Communication, Core Vocabulary, Natural Aided Language
More Materials for Your Training

- **MASTER PAL Series:**
  - bit.ly/MASTERPAL

- 11 Modules on AAC facilitation strategies
- Each one includes downloadable slides, handouts, video links, talking points, etc.

THANK YOU!