DYNAMIC AAC GOALS

The Dynamic AAC Goals Grid is a tool for assessment and measurement of an individual's current level of communication ability across communicative competencies. In addition, it may be used to assist with planning more appropriate future communication goals with the overall goal of achieving successful communication as independently as possible.

Developed in conjunction with Dynamic Therapy Associates of Kennesaw, GA. www.mydynamictherapy.com

COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCIES

Skills in these four areas are directly related to conversational interactions using an AAC system:

- **Linguistic:** Receptive and expressive language; Learning and using vocabulary, sentence structure and pre-programmed messages in increasing number, variety and complexity

- **Operational:** Skills related to the maintenance and operation of the AAC system

- **Social:** Skills needed to communicate effectively and in socially appropriate ways such as initiating, maintaining, developing and terminating an interaction

- **Strategic:** Strategies to overcome or minimize the functional limitations of AAC and to prevent or repair communication breakdowns

COMMUNICATION ABILITY LEVEL

Each Communicative Competency has been organized into three levels - Emergent, Context-Dependent, Independent. In the AAC Goals Grid, these levels provide a way to define observable communication behaviors for present and progressing competency skills. We suggest evaluating from Emergent moving forward through Independent (see InterAACt Framework checklist on last page).

PROMPTING HIERARCHY

When we are trying to teach a target skill, we often use a graduated or "least to most" prompting hierarchy to elicit the communicative response. The ultimate goal is that the individual recognizes the opportunity to communicate given only natural conversational cues (e.g. facial expression, actions, gesture, statement or question) or natural environmental cues (e.g. desired object is out of reach). If the individual is using a "Natural Cue" the targeted goal would be met. Consider the following example:

- **Goal Met (Natural Cue):** Other people saying hello

- **Indirect Cue (IC)**
  - Search light – randomly moving light/pointer over device
  - Verbal – "Did you hear what they said?" "I wonder if you could say something back?"
  - Visual/Gestural – shrug of shoulders, "I don't know" hand gesture

- **Direct Verbal Cue (DVC):** "They said hello to you." or "They were nice to say "hello" to you."

- **Direct Pointer Cue (DPC):** Showing the location of "hi" on the device without activating it

- **Physical Assistance (PA):** Provide some means of physical assistance to activate the appropriate message on device

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DynaVox®

InterAACt™ FRAMEWORK

COMMUNICATION ABILITY LEVEL

EMERGENT	CONTEXT-DEPENDENT	INDEPENDENT

AGE GROUPS:
- YOUNG CHILD 2-6
- CHILD 7-13
- TEEN 14-21
- YOUNG ADULT 22-50
- ADULT 50+

What is InterAACt? InterAACt is the language framework used on all DynaVox devices. It allows individuals with speech and language disabilities to successfully communicate, develop higher-level language skills and express themselves, in everyday activities. InterAACt uses familiar communication settings that are natural and easy-to-use. InterAACt provides individuals with the communication messages they need to say what they want and how they want in a timely manner.

Mark each statement that best describes an individual's observable communication behaviors. Use this guide to help provide insight to current and potential target skills and strengths, as well as to identify the most appropriate set of communication pages in their DynaVox device. It is not necessary to achieve skills in order within a given communication ability level as individuals may demonstrate skills in more than one level.

EMERGENT

- May be starting to follow directions within routines and familiar activities.
- May be communicating most successfully using facial expression, body language, gestures and/or behaviors (either socially appropriate behaviors or challenging behaviors).
- May have a few messages that (s)he communicates well and/or often using symbols or any methods listed above.
- Frequency and reliability of both understanding and expression varies from day-to-day and/or activity-to-activity.
- Pictures seem to increase both comprehension and expression.
- Attempts to communicate are most frequent in motivating situations or favorite activities.
- When using symbols to communicate (e.g., pictures, signs, objects), uses only one symbol at a time.
- May be beginning to use clear and simple symbols (including objects, photographs and picture symbols) in motivating situations and/or favorite activities.
- Benefits from help from his/her communication partner to communicate successfully (e.g., narrowing choices, page navigation, interpreting gestures/body language).
- May be starting to show interest in social interactions, especially with familiar people.

NOTE: "Children's natural actions and behaviors are the only prerequisites to AAC... Early behaviors and skills facilitate the gradual development of more complex communication skills, including language" (Cress & Marvin, 2003).

We believe that this is true of individuals of all ages. As a result, the communication system should embrace growth and development.

CONTEXT-DEPENDENT

- Understands general conversations and directions.
- Understands picture symbols that represent objects and common actions (e.g., run, paint, eat).
- Starting to understand more abstract picture symbols (e.g., think, big, hot, few).
- Uses symbols and objects spontaneously to communicate basic needs and wants.
- Uses a combination of communication methods (e.g., pictures, objects, pointing/gestures, speech vocalizations) to express messages.
- Beginning to combine two or more symbols to create longer and/or more complex messages.
- Communicates best in routines and regarding familiar topics.
- Benefits from help to initiate social interaction and/or take additional turns in conversation.
- Benefits from help to participate in interactions in new environments and with new people.
- May continue to benefit from the help of his/her communication partner to narrow down choices, navigate pages and to interpret their communicative attempts (e.g., gestures, word approximations, etc.) as skills develop.
- Literacy skills developing (e.g. letter names and sounds, sight words, spelling of simple words).

NOTE: Because these characteristics cover a broad range of skills, many AAC users fall into this category.

INDEPENDENT

- Understands communication the same as same-age peers.
- Able to talk about a broad range of age-appropriate topics in flexible ways.
- Combines single words, spelling, phrases and complete messages together to support routine and novel communication about a variety of subjects as would others of his/her age.
- Changes the way words and phrases are combined based on the communication partner and situation.
- Literacy skills on par with same-age peers.
- Social interaction skills, environments, and activities are similar to others of his/her age.
- Participates in age-appropriate communication environments and activities.
- Actively participates with communication partner when communication breakdowns occur.

NOTE: Self-sufficiency and flexibility when using AAC is not a characteristic limited to individuals at the Independent level. Context-Dependent users can also be self-sufficient and/or flexible with AAC. However, their skills in language, literacy and social interaction will be below those expected of same-age peers.

DYNAMIC AAC GOAL GRID

COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCY

LINGUISTIC | OPERATIONAL | SOCIAL | STRATEGIC

COMMUNICATIVE ABILITY LEVEL

EMERGENT

LINGUISTIC — EMERGENT

GM items (columns: IC DVC DPC PA):
- Communicates behaviorally (eye gaze, point, pull partner to, etc.) to request/respond/comment and socially interact
- Rejects undesired propositions or item behaviorally
- Responds positively to propositions, activities and/or offered items behaviorally (brief glance, nod, eye contact, smile or touch)
- Uses reliable signals (e.g. sign/sign approx., obj/pic symbol, verbal/ verbal approx.) to represent intended message in immediate environment
- Request/comment/labels a tangible object with single noun symbol given an array of 2 or more symbols in familiar routine/context with setup as needed
- Request/comment/labels a familiar concrete action with single verb symbol given an array of 2 or more symbols during a familiar routine/context with setup as needed
- Selects single button messages in familiar contexts to participate in or move an interation along with setup as needed

Q1 ____ % Q2 ____ % Q3 ____ % Q4 ____ %

OPERATIONAL — EMERGENT

- Demonstrates ability to turn (or asks) system on/off when appropriate with setup as needed
- Locates high frequency and high interest vocabulary on device with setup as needed
- Demonstrates ability to follow (or asks) charging schedule with setup as needed
- Transports device (or asks) with setup as needed
- Positions device (or asks) for use with setup as needed
- Exhibits motor memory for consistently placed navigational buttons (e.g. close popup/go back on top left side of page; Quickfires on top right side of page)

Q1 ____ % Q2 ____ % Q3 ____ % Q4 ____ %

SOCIAL — EMERGENT

- Interacts socially through behaviors (smiling, object-based turn taking, waving)-(e.g. understands social cause and effect)
- Responds to communication
- Periodically references communication partner during interaction through brief glance, nod, eye contact, proximity or touch (joint attention)
- Uses communication techniques to replace challenging behaviors (e.g. "more", "all done") with setup as needed
- Comments appropriately when engaged in activity with setup as needed
- Uses polite social forms (e.g. Please, Thank you)
- Initiates/terminates interactions using pre-stored messages with setup as needed (e.g. scripted greetings)
- Demonstrates conversational turn taking in errorless or familiar interaction/activity with setup as needed
- Shares several pieces of preprogrammed "news"/information with setup as needed

Q1 ____ % Q2 ____ % Q3 ____ % Q4 ____ %

STRATEGIC — EMERGENT

- Understands that his/her communication (regardless of modality) has an effect on the environment or communication partner
- Recognizes the need to obtain the communication partner's attention before initiating a message with setup as needed
- Uses an introduction strategy with unfamiliar communication partner with setup as needed (e.g. "I use this device to talk", pointing to the device to show they use it to communicate)
- Recognizes the need to repeat message when intended message is misunderstood or ignored
- Uses different mode of communication (e.g. gesture, vocalization, behavior, etc.) for misunderstood message with setup as needed
- Requests or obtains the communication system when appropriate

Q1 ____ % Q2 ____ % Q3 ____ % Q4 ____ %

CONTEXT DEPENDENT

LINGUISTIC — CONTEXT DEPENDENT

- Selects scene or category symbol to navigate to appropriate message/s for present context/activity
- Understands and uses action concepts (at least 10 verbs across situations)
- Uses learned sentence constructions (carrier phrases) for creative 2+ word phrases (e.g "I want ___." "I see ___." "I have ___.")
- Generates novel or creative 2+ word simple sentences
- Understands and uses abstract descriptive concepts: quantitative/qualitative/spatial (at least 3 in each category)
- Sequences information in a logical manner to tell or retell a story (narrative)
- Asks and answers a variety of prestored question forms
- Generates simple grammatical sentences using present ("ing") and past ("ed") tense
- Uses plural "s" to denote more than one
- Recognizes letter/sound associations
- Recognizes and uses high frequency onsets and rhymes to spell familiar words

Q1 ____ % Q2 ____ % Q3 ____ % Q4 ____ %

OPERATIONAL — CONTEXT DEPENDENT

- Asks for assistance if equipment requires adjustment
- Adjusts volume and speech controls (rate/voice)
- Demonstrates ability (or asks) to charge and care for device
- Adjusts (or asks) screen or position for best visibility and access
- Locates commonly used vocabulary
- Participates in adding vocabulary
- Navigates to logical page/message/vocabulary during an interaction
- Demonstrates ability to access external equipment with setup as needed (phone, email, text, computer, IR)
- Demonstrates ability to manage simple Message Window operations (e.g. clear, delete)

Q1 ____ % Q2 ____ % Q3 ____ % Q4 ____ %

SOCIAL — CONTEXT DEPENDENT

- Maintains eye contact as appropriate
- Initiates/terminates conversations using scripted preprogrammed messages
- Demonstrates conversational turn-taking (social/activity based)
- Maintains topic with a non-obligatory turn (e.g. head nod or comment "cool" "yuck" "me too")
- Shares personally meaningful novel information using phrases, word lists, core words, and/or keyboard
- Uses spontaneous greetings and farewells using a rote/memorized repertoire
- Shifts topics smoothly with suggestions (e.g. common segues such as "I have something to tell you" or "Guess what?")
- Requests information (e.g. "When?" or "Where?")
- Requests a variety of actions (e.g. "Turn the page" or "Get the ___ for me")
- Asks partner focused questions using pre-stored messages (e.g. "What did you do?")
- Uses humor

Q1 ____ % Q2 ____ % Q3 ____ % Q4 ____ %

STRATEGIC — CONTEXT DEPENDENT

- Engages communication partner(s) visually during the interaction to monitor their attention and understanding
- Adjusts volume to fit the setting
- Independently uses an introduction strategy with unfamiliar communication partner (e.g. descriptive instructions on how best to communicate with him/her)
- Recognizes the intended message was not understood and uses a message to alert ("Wrong try again" or "Let me tell you another way" or "Wait", shaking head)
- Uses a repair strategy for communication breakdowns (e.g. repeat, rephrase, provide additional key word or information, draw attention to message window, use non-verbal cues -gesture/body or facial expression, first letter cue)
- Selects a communication mode appropriate to the situation with a familiar communication partner
- Proactively manages the interaction (e.g. interjects with "wait" or "hang on" while he/she retrieves message or "yeah" "uh-huh" letting listener know he/she is engaged)
- Demonstrates emerging use of simple rate enhancement strategies (e.g. telegraphic strategy)

Q1 ____ % Q2 ____ % Q3 ____ % Q4 ____ %

INDEPENDENT

LINGUISTIC — INDEPENDENT

- Uses existing vocabulary to describe new word/concept not in device (flexible vocabulary use)
- Generates creative messages by combining individual words/phrases/spelling, with increased length and/or complexity
- Understands and uses morphological endings to qualify verbs ("er", "ly")
- Demonstrates independent spelling skills at age level with or without word prediction
- Constructs complex and compound sentences ("because," "and," "that," etc)
- Uses question reversals conversationally ("Can I?" "Did you?" "Are they?")
- Demonstrates the ability to understand and discuss linguistic structures and forms related to communication system

Q1 ____ % Q2 ____ % Q3 ____ % Q4 ____ %

OPERATIONAL — INDEPENDENT

- Meets communicative needs by independently navigating to appropriate language components (pre-programmed and/or generative messages/words/phrases/spelling) within system
- Arranges equipment upgrades, troubleshoots, initiates repair procedures
- Independently adds vocabulary specific to constructs of the system
- Demonstrates ability to access external equipment independently (phone, email, text, computer, IR)
- Independently stores files, customized messages and sequences
- Demonstrates understanding of the operation of device software features (e.g. word prediction, pronunciation exceptions, editing features, etc.)

Q1 ____ % Q2 ____ % Q3 ____ % Q4 ____ %

SOCIAL — INDEPENDENT

- Selects topic of mutual interest to self and communication partner
- Requests clarification
- Uses non-obligatory commenting and/or questions related to conversational topic
- Initiation/closure of conversation using a variety of both pre-programmed and/or generative messages
- Uses partner focused questions to continue conversation with specific subject related vocabulary
- Demonstrates ability to initiate, maintain, extend and terminate conversations appropriately

Q1 ____ % Q2 ____ % Q3 ____ % Q4 ____ %

STRATEGIC — INDEPENDENT

- Independently utilizes several strategies to prevent communication breakdowns
- Communicates intent to contribute to a conversation (e.g. "I have a question")
- Plans ahead to contribute effectively in a conversation (e.g. compose and store messages for doctor before appt.)
- Selects a communication mode appropriate to a variety of situations and listeners
- Creatively uses device features to communicate effectively and efficiently
- Signals a topic change with appropriate message
- Independently analyzes errors in communication interactions and devises strategies to address it
- Demonstrates mature or independent use of rate enhancement strategies (e.g. telegraphic, abbreviation or text-speech strategy; character/word/phrase prediction)

Q1 ____ % Q2 ____ % Q3 ____ % Q4 ____ %

CHAIN OF CUES PROMPTING HIERARCHY

GM: GOAL MET (USES CUES NATURAL TO SKILL/ACTIVITY) • **IC:** INDIRECT CUE • **DVC:** DIRECT VERBAL CUE • **DPC:** DIRECT POINTER CUE • **PA:** PHYSICAL ASSISTANCE

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