Developing Communication Strategies in the Classroom

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About Us

• Me
- Teacher/Specialist Teacher (mainstream & special education),
- Private Literacy Tutor
- Previously at the ILC Tech as an Educational Technology Specialist
- Literacy for All has been a lifelong passion
- A Voice for All is my current focus

• You
- Educational Setting? (Mainstream classes, ESC, ESU, Year?)
- Roles and Responsibilities? (Classroom, 1:1, Specialist Area)
- Current knowledge? (AAC, ALS, CCN, PODD, SGD, 4 Blocks)
- Students with CCN?
- Other?
Why are we here?

“Everyone has the need to communicate. The challenge is to figure out a way of providing all individuals with appropriate ways to meet this need, regardless of their age, diagnoses or level of disability.”

(Sigafoos & O’Reilly, 2004)

“No student is too anything to be able to read & write”

(David Yoder, 2000)
Why are we here?
Overview

- Alternative and Augmentative Communication (AAC)
- Myths & Questions about AAC
- Aided Language Stimulation (ALS)
- Engineering the Environment
- Low Tech Communication Aids
- Vocabulary
- AAC & Literacy
Alternative and Augmentative Communication (AAC)

Refers to the extra ways of helping people who find it hard to communicate by speech or writing.

- gestures,
- sign language,
- use of picture symbols,
- the alphabet or
- devices that produce digitised or synthesised speech.

AAC helps them to communicate more effectively.
Who uses AAC?

People with

- Complex Communication Needs
- Autism Spectrum Disorder
- Cerebral Palsy
- Intellectual Disability
- Downs Syndrome
- Unintelligible speech - dyspraxia, dysarthria
- Developmental Delay
- Brain Injury
- Others
Why use AAC?

“A child who is not able to communicate effectively is at great risk for cognitive, social, emotional and behavioural problems.”

“Communication is critical to a student’s development from both a personal and educational perspective hence, the successful integration of an AAC system into the school’s curriculum program will have a profound impact on educational outcomes for the student.”

(Berry, 1987; Silverman, 1980).
Everyone communicates
Not having speech is not the same as not understanding
Individuals who have difficulty speaking have the same right as those who can speak
People learn to communicate in the way they experience communication being used.
Communication is messy
Communication is interactive
Doesn’t require perfection!
Communication is not just an activity
Make sure we don’t miss any students

Burkhart & Porter, 2009 & 2010
The Communication Bill of Rights

You have the right:

- to be offered choices
- to learn about life
- to learn about yourself
- to be included in social interaction
- to be listened to
- to aids, services and resources
- to express feelings
- to understand communications
- to reject
- to request information
- to have access to information
- to be communicated with in a dignified manner

This publication has been developed as a joint initiative between Compic and Scope. It has been adapted by permission from the Australian Speech Language and Hearing Association: Communication Resource Centre, Compic, Scope, 806 Whitehorse Road Box Hill VIC 3128.
Communication - A Multi Modal Process

• Expressive and Receptive
• Talking
• Facial Expressions
• Gestures & Signing
• Vocalisations
• Pointing
• Writing (typing)
• Yes/No Response
• Low Tech Communication Aids
• Voice Output Communication Devices
Key Word Sign
(Makaton)

Key Word Signing
“finish”
Picture Symbols

Playdough

I

you

Uh oh!

more

roll it

make a snake

more

squash it

make sausages

finished

cut it

make pizza

play dough
Communication Devices
Common Myths About AAC

- AAC is a last thing we try when therapy hasn’t been successful
- AAC stops the development of speech
- Children need certain prerequisite skills to be able to use AAC
- Children need to be a certain age to be able to benefit from AAC
- AAC is used for requesting
Common Questions About AAC

• How early should we begin?
• Will this child ever talk?
• Does the student need to recognise the symbols before we start AAC interventions?
• Is high tech better than low tech?

YAACK - AAC CONNECTING YOUNG KIDS
http://aac.unl.edu/yaack/b2.html
Myth Blasters

Research tells us ….

• Don’t wait & see - work towards effective communication now!

• AAC does not interfere with a child’s ability to develop verbal communication.
  
  (Berry, 1987; Daniels, 1994; Romski & Sevcik, 1993; Konstantareas, 1984; Silverman, 1980)

• We always use speech alongside AAC.

• AAC should not replace the communication skills that someone already has (speech, vocalisations, gestures).

• Always encourage multiple modes of communication.
Myth Blasters

There are no prerequisite skills to commence using AAC.

(Kangas & Lloyd, 1988)

“New concepts/words should be taught by using them, not by expecting a child to first demonstrate understanding of them and promoting passive interaction. Recognising and pointing to symbols in response to questions is a very different skill from initiating a new ideas with those symbols in conversation”

(Cress & Marvin, 2003, p. 271)

When a child’s earliest communicative acts are difficult to understand, the child’s need for AAC intervention begins.
Myth Blasters

Communication is more than just requesting!

Low and high tech communication aids can be used separately or together.

Different tools for different communication tasks!
Aided Language Stimulation (ALS)

A teaching strategy where the facilitator (e.g. parent, educator, therapist) highlights symbols on a communication display while interacting and communicating verbally with the user.

- receptive input (provide input before expecting output, plenty of expressive training with opportunities to initiate communication, cues to initiate)

- engineer the environment (with aided symbols to enable spontaneous generative use, ensure vocab is always available for use, system design)

*Aided Language Stimulation (Goossens’, Crain & Elder, 1992)
Spoken Language Development

Child learning aided language

Gayle Porter, 2004
The Goal

Aided language
Spoken language

Aided language
(Spoken language)

Gayle Porter, 2004
ALS – what does it look like?
ALS – what does it look like?
ALS – what does it look like?
ALS – what can you do?

Provide good language stimulation via
- modelling (model the whole process)
- expanding
- observing
- responding/scaffolding (provide structured guidance)
- frequent opportunities to see language used
- frequent opportunities to communicate
- interactive cues and prompts as required

Remember to keep your language simple, clear and direct and try to point to the appropriate symbols as you speak.

Make sure vocabulary is always available to the user
ALS – how do you do it?

• Point to the aided symbols as you speak to the child “Do you want a story?”

• Use the symbols to say whatever you would normally say in the activity “Fast car brrooommm”

• Another child/helper/adult facilitator can model what the child could say during the interaction

• Respond to any attempt the student makes to communicate

• Does the student have to say it aloud? Avoid .. “say it”
ALS – how do you make it work?

- expect children to communicate
- expect others to use AAC systems
- engineer the school environment
- set up the classroom for ALS
- make communication systems always available
- vocabulary input (receptive before expressive)
- expand the variety of communicative functions
- use conversational language (avoid extraneous language)
- expect delayed processing time
- sabotage and create opportunities
- use multiple communication systems
ALS – what are the issues?

- understanding that the initial goal is to provide receptive input in order to stimulate the development of expressive communication
- reluctance to „jump in“ and provide vocabulary for learning via receptive input
- design of displays to enable rich language input
- time spent trying to design and make „perfect“ displays before starting to provide receptive input
- organising displays so you can access the vocab you need when you need it
We need to...

to reach their communication potential!

the potential in every student to improve their communication skills

every student through access to vocabulary and technology

.... to reach their communication potential!
Engineering the Environment

Using Symbols in the Classroom
Engineering the Environment

Visual Supports

• Schedules

• Mini Schedules

• Calendars

• Social Stories

• Checklists

• Chat Book

• Behaviour Supports
Engineering the Environment

Low tech Communication Aids

- Personal communication dictionaries
- Personal chat books and journals
- Core vocabulary desktop placemats
- Activity boards/answer displays/topic displays
- Playground communication vests
- Behaviour management displays
- Bathroom and personal hygiene displays
- Comfort displays
Low tech Communication Aids

- Book reading displays
- Story specific displays
- Literacy displays
- Narrative/Anecdote displays
- General interaction placemats and displays
- Community interaction aids
- Communication books (complex general aid)
- PODD communication books
Desktop Placemat

Velcro Activity Input Boards Here
Core Vocabulary - Activity

Reading Books
- read
- read again
- choose
- book
- turn page
- talk about
- picture
- quiet
- look
- listen
- funny
- sad
- scary
- great
Comfort Display

- something's wrong
- feel
- sick
- sore, hurt
- upset
- head ache
- ear ache
- sore throat
- sore mouth
- stomach ache
- angry
- worried
- scared
- frustrated
- tired
- hot
- cold
- hungry
- thirsty
- throw up
- lonely
- too noisy
- quiet
- not
- happy
- skin
- scratch
- bleeding
- itch
- AFO rubbing
- cuddle
- rest
- tickle
- book
- leave me alone
- go
- nurse
- doctor
- home
- hospital
Playground Vest
Activity Display

- pack up
- chair
- sit down
- stand up
- table
- good morning
- quiet
- look
- listen
- legs down
- tell
- Name
- Day of the week
  Su M T W Th F Sa
- Weather
- Timetable
- choose
- find
- match
- show & tell
- sing
Activity Display

curtain
get undressed
clothes
on
off

hang up
turn
water
feel water
hot
cold
get in shower
wash
face
hair

body
rinse body
get towel
dry
get dressed
Activity Display

- play
- board games
- choose
- ready
- Who goes first?
- roll dice
- share
- move
- count
- no cheating
- how many
- which one
- Who's next?
- watch out
- Oops!
- win
- lose
- boring
- fun
- play again
Activity Display

- play dough
- choose
- use
- hands
- make
- squeeze
- roll
- squash
- poke
- pinch
- shape
- snake shape
- ball shape
- hold
- cut
- cutter
- cookie cutters
- knife
- rolling pin
- flat
Computer Surround
AAC in the Classroom
AAC in the Classroom
Choose words:
• that are related to the communication situation or activity
• that the students would use (sample mainstream)
• that you would use to model
• that encourage a range of communication functions
  - requesting (juice, puzzle, computer)
  - commenting (cool, oops, boring)
  - core words (I, you, like, go, stop. more)
LOSER!
“Yucky”  “Look!”

“Wash?”  “Gooey”
“Children used a core vocabulary comprising 263 words, which accounted for 79.8% of their total communication sample.”

(Trembath et al., 2007)
Core Vocabulary: an Australian study

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<td>away</td>
<td>friend</td>
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<td>doing</td>
<td>she</td>
<td>so</td>
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<td>who</td>
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<td>other</td>
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<td>quick</td>
<td>name</td>
<td>lunch</td>
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(Trembath et al., 2007)
“Approximately 70% of individuals with severe communication impairments are significantly behind their peers in literacy learning.”

(Koppenhaver & Yoder, 1992)

For people who have complex communication needs, literacy is an important key to unlocking communication barriers and improving quality of life.
“… no symbol system, no matter how linguistically-based or how many thousands of items it can represent, can compare to the alphabet.

With just a small set of letters (for example, 26 in English), any literate individual who has complex communication needs can write anything, in any way she or he chooses.”

(ACN, Vol. 9, No. 4, 1996)
AAC & Literacy

Three of the main ingredients needed to help create a literate person:

• print rich environment
  (labels and models)
• access to writing and reading
  (play with books, draw, pretend to be readers & writers)
• interactive storybook reading
  (read frequently, relate to experiences, contribute in some way)

Steelman, Pierce, Coleman & Koppenhaver, 1992
Participation for students with CCN

- If they have a comprehensive communication system (eg PODD) then they can use that to participate across the day;
- If they don“t then we need to provide ways for them to participate;
- AND we need to work towards getting them a comprehensive communication system.
AAC & Literacy

Provide comprehensive AAC supports to:

- Model and expand an extensive vocabulary
- Activate background knowledge with a student
- Set a wide range of purposes
- Enables students to:
- Relate information about life experiences and other texts
AAC & Literacy

Strategies to develop Literacy for CCN students:

- Use a vocabulary set derived from the target story throughout the day (that is, for multiple activities)
- Facilitate repeated readings
- Provide opportunities to see themselves as literate
- Provide opportunities to participate
AAC & Literacy in the Classroom
AAC & Literacy in the Classroom
“Literacy doesn’t just happen, it is cultivated over time…”

“Literacy learning cannot be allotted to one hour per day within the school curriculum nor delegated to only the classroom teacher, education assistant, special educator or speech pathologist; it is a team effort, to be accomplished throughout the day, at school and at home.”

Steelman, Coleman & Koppenhaver, 1992
One Voice
References


References


• Goossens", C., Crain, S. and Elder, P. (1992) *Engineering the pre-school environment for interactive symbolic communication*

References


References

