Core vocabulary, communication goals and implementation strategies

Research and implementation results have shown:
- Core vocabulary is (or should be) an integral part of any AAC system.
- AAC supports that consist primarily of nouns and descriptors are very limiting.
- These kinds of communication displays restricted our clients to requesting and labeling.
- Providing only pre-stored messages limits the client’s ability to communicate anything novel. It is not flexible enough to meet most communication needs.
- Without core vocabulary, we were imposing a ceiling on language development.

Goals for students who use devices:
- To communicate (with peers as well as adults)
- To learn language
- To initiate language – not just respond
- To make friends
- To gain independence – to be able to say what they want to say
- To gain interdependence
- To learn academic content
- To participate in class or workplace
- To learn/improve access
- To learn cause and effect
- To learn turn taking

Nine wishes from students who use AAC
- I wish my friends would joke with me.
- I wish my teachers would learn how to work my communication aide(s).
- I wish adults would stop shouting at me like I can’t hear.
- I wish my therapist wouldn’t have a heart attach when my machine doesn’t work.
- I wish my friends would have more patience with me.
- I wish my teacher would call on me for “Share Day”.
- I wish everyone would give me enough time to say what I’m thinking.
- I wish people wouldn’t hit my machine when it doesn’t work. That’s my mouth.
- I wish I could walk and talk like my sister and brother.

Reasons AAC Users don’t use their device/systems
- Users don’t have anything to say because the device doesn’t have the vocabulary needed to say what they want it to say. (vocabulary selection)
- Users don’t understand what’s expected.
- Devices contain messages that are not important.
- Users get what they want/need without the device.
Users don’t want to appear different.
People interpret for them.
Familiar people can understand their speech (or anticipate their needs).
The device has been used as a tool for academic learning, not communication. (motivation)

Communication partners’ behaviors that do not facilitate communication

- Talk too much.
- Ask too many questions (sometimes more than one at a time).
- Don’t provide enough wait time.
- Ask yes/no questions.
- Do not model desired vocabulary
- Do not model correct response
- Position of device/materials
- Position of participants
- No opportunities for turn-taking
- Limited opportunities to practice symbol combinations
- Too much verbal prompting

Communication Functions

Language is learned through broad experiences that provide multiple opportunities for repetition of concepts, use of vocabulary and conversations that are motivating. Students need to learn the power of communication.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reasons to Communicate</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Initiate/ call attention</td>
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<td>• Greet</td>
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<td>• Accept</td>
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<td>• Reject</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Request</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Name</td>
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<td>• Acknowledge</td>
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<td>• Answer</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Comment</td>
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<td>• Express feelings</td>
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<td>• Assert independence</td>
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<td>• Ask questions</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Share information</td>
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<td>• Relate events</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Talk about past/future</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Negotiate/bargain</td>
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<tr>
<td>• State opinions</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Make up stories</td>
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<td>• Express manners</td>
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<td>• Show consideration</td>
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Teaching Core Vocabulary

To teach core, we need:

- Ways to elicit these words
- *LOTS* of opportunities to practice these words

Where to begin

- Keep the motor plan consistent
- Work toward automaticity
- Teach the patterns
- Give time to explore.
- Hide keys – gradually show more keys
- Model device use
- Give feedback no matter what the user says
- Over generalize / teach a variety of meanings
- Use natural settings – play, work, eating activities
- Increase expectations
- Communication not compliance
- Provide opportunities to communicate
- Teach core words first

Using books

Adapting Books:

- Create your own books – use pictures from field trips / photos of students
- Create age appropriate books – using pictures from magazines
- Change or Delete Words – simplify the text
- Put icons in books
- Laminate pages
- Add spacers to make it easy to turn pages
- Scan books into Power Point – makes it easy to turn pages with single switch

Advantages of Books:

- Can control the vocabulary
- Get lots of vocabulary repetition without drill
- Provides carryover into the home
- Fits into the school curriculum
- Promotes literacy
Using toys

Instead of creating a new page for each toy, use core words when playing:
- Go - stop
- My turn – Your turn
- More
- Turn (on, off)
- Get (in, out)
- Go (up, down, in, out, on, off, away)

Using Games

Games
- Go Fish – use only core vocabulary
- Concentration or Memory with core words
- Mr. Potato Head Pals
- Barnyard Bingo – adapted if needed
- Bingo Games – use only core vocabulary
- 20 Questions
- Fun with Descriptions
- Jeopardy and other PowerPoint
- Guess Who – Leisure Dynamics, Inc.
- Secret Square – University Games
- What’s My Name – Ravensburger (need to modify some pictures)
- Outburst and Outburst Jr. – Hersch and Co.
- Scavenger Hunt

Personal and Social Skills:
- Turn Taking
- Patience – waiting your turn
- Honesty – not cheating; “I did It”
- Persistence – finishing the game
- Co-operation
- Team building
- Sharing
- Making Friends

Language Skills:
- Vocabulary development
- Following directions
- Commenting
- Requesting
- Answering questions
- Language development
Writing Strategies

- Take pictures – write captions / stories
- Guided Writing – provide pictures, give suggestions to facilitate the writing (color, size, action, what it does, etc.)
- Interface with the computer – use programs that allow you to import pictures and allows the child to write captions or stories or tell someone else what to write using their AAC device.
- E-mail
- Letter Writing – Pen Pals, Invitations, Thank-you, etc.
- Story Writing – Story Frames
- Report Writing – Book Reports, etc.
- Journal Writing

Speaking Strategies

- Social Communication before Academic Communication
- Consider normal language – know when to use
  - a single word
  - a phrase
  - a sentence
- Communication should be FUN not drill and practice.
- Compliance vs. Communication
- Structure the environment to promote communication

Resources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sources for books with core vocabulary</th>
<th>Sources for core vocabulary in general</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><a href="https://aalanguage.lab.com/resources">https://aalanguage.lab.com/resources</a></td>
<td><a href="http://www.aacandaautism.com/common-words">http://www.aacandaautism.com/common-words</a></td>
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</table>
Moving beyond naming objects and making choices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Communication Skills</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gains attention appropriately.</td>
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<td>Uses social greetings.</td>
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<td>Introduces self when appropriate.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Asks questions to gain information.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Initiates topics appropriately.</td>
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<td>Indicates personal states (emotions, sick, pain).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Uses polite social forms.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Seeks help when needed.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Provides communication partner with instructions when needed.</td>
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<td>Uses communication system without being prompted.</td>
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<td>Restates and repairs communication attempts.</td>
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<td>Expands upon messages to add details.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Alerts communication partner that more time is needed to formulate a message.</td>
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<td>Gives (appropriate) feedback when message is not understood.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Negotiates and bargains.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gives feedback to confirm understanding.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Remains on topic (communication turn taking).</td>
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<td>Indicates when message is completed</td>
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