My Core is Strong – Now What?

Beth Saunders, M.S., CCC/SLP/ATP
Assistive Technology Consultant
beth@saltilloconsultant.com
Phone: 954-649-1234

Disclosure Information

- This presentation will focus exclusively on using core vocabulary to communicate.
- I am a Per Diem consultant of the Saltillo Corporation.
- CCC/SLP/ATP
- Assistive Technology Consultant

Everyone needs a good analogy...

- Strengthening the core stability muscles
- There are main 3 stages to attaining a strong core.
  - Stage 1: Independent core contraction
  - Stage 2: Integrated focused core exercises
  - Stage 3: Incorporate into functional activities

Survey

1. Who has seen that slide?
2. Who knows the difference between core & fringe?
3. Who has students in their classroom or caseload using AAC devices?
4. Where do you see your students/clients?
Not being able to speak is not the same as not having anything to say.

Everybody has something to say.

It’s all about the vocabulary!!!!!!

Myths About AAC
- Cognition – too low to learn AAC
- Behavior – have to be under control first
- Proof of desire – don’t think he actually wants to communicate
- Hierarchy – none, try everything
- Motor skills – need bigger buttons
- Age – have to be a certain age for device

Myths About AAC
- Verbal speech – can already talk
- Symbol representation – understand before they can use device
- Hinder verbalization - consistent auditory feedback provides a model & frequently improve verbal speech skills. Often, a “side effect”.
Reminders

- We are speaking AAC here
- Speech input ➔ AAC output
- Make language visible
- Need to learn language the way they will express it

Reminders

- We are speaking AAC here
- Speech input ➔ AAC output
- Make language visible
- Need to learn language the way they will express it

Bicycle Analogy

- Can’t just “tell” someone how to ride a bike.
- They must visualize/“see” a competent cyclist.

Modeling

- AAC users need to see how the new way of communicating works.
- Modeling is an AAC technique supported by research and clinical experience as an effective way to teach language (vocabulary & grammar), responsiveness and use of AAC (Binger & Light, 2007; Beck et al, 2009).
- This technique is often referred to as Aided Language Stimulation (ALS).

Aided Language Stimulation

Learning from Modeling

- Input before output
- All children learn from modeling
- Learning something new takes time
Learning AAC is sometimes likened to learning a second language. We know from the literature on second language learning that proficiency with basic social communication is achieved in 2-3 years, but academic language takes 5-7 years (Collier, 1987). It may be useful to consider these time periods to gauge expectations for children becoming proficient with a symbol communication system.

Generative Language is Based on **Core Words**

- 85 - 90% of what we say throughout the day comes from a small bank of 400-500 core words.
- 20% of what we say comes from thousands of fringe words.

(Baker & Hill, 2000)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics of a Core Vocabulary</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Core Words</td>
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<tr>
<td>Small # of words</td>
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<tr>
<td>Used about 80% of the time in daily communication</td>
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<tr>
<td>Useful across all environments</td>
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<tr>
<td>Applicable to most topics and environments</td>
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<tr>
<td>Contains a variety of parts of speech: pronouns, verbs, descriptors etc.</td>
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<td>High frequency of use</td>
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<td>Words with more flexibility from different word classes</td>
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<td>Can demonstrate larger variety of communicative functions</td>
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<td>Allows for more communicative opportunities</td>
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<td>Potential for expanding utterance length</td>
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<td>Consistency of symbol location</td>
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Goal = Communication and Language

- Communicate anytime
- Communicate anything
- Communicate with anyone
Research and implementation results have shown that core vocabulary should be an integral part of teaching communication skills.

http://praacticalaac.org/strategy/teaching-core-vocabulary/

### Research results

- AAC options that consist primarily of nouns & descriptors are limiting.
- Restrict users to requesting & labeling.
- Pre-stored messages restrict ability to communicate anything novel.
- Not flexible enough to meet most communication needs.
- Impose ceilings on language development.

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### Functional Communication

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.

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### 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>Sales situations appropriately</td>
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<tr>
<td>Uses social greetings</td>
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<td>Introduces self-years appropriately</td>
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<tr>
<td>Asks questions to gain information</td>
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<tr>
<td>Indicates topics appropriately</td>
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<tr>
<td>Indicates personal status (observations, acts, past)</td>
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<td>Uses public notices</td>
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<tr>
<td>Seeds 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 partner without being prompted</td>
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<tr>
<td>Restores and repairs communication attempts</td>
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<td>Expects open messages in addition</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>Gathers (progressive) feedback when message is not understood</td>
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<td>Negotiates and bargains</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Gains feedback to confirm understanding</td>
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<tr>
<td>Remains on topic (communication not fading)</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Indicates when message is completed</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reveals choices</td>
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Teaching “core”

Need a plan:
- Know your student/client: SETT
- Create ways to elicit words: Activity First
- Provide lots of opportunities to practice

What is SETT?

**Student:** ability, needs

**Environment:** location, setting

**Task(s):** functional communication, activity, curriculum

**Tools:** device/system, materials

Critical Elements of SETT

- Shared knowledge
- Collaboration
- Communication
- Multiple perspectives
- Pertinent information
- Flexibility
- On-going process
Where to Start


- Do not require verbal responses
- Preschool through school age
- Developed for population at large vs specific group
- IQ scores correlate with academic achievement

Typical Language Development

- 18 months
  5-20 words
- 2 years old
  150-300 words
- 3 years old
  900-1,000 words
- 5-6 years old
  2,500-5,000 words
Communication Skills Assessment

- Cognitive Abilities Scale-Second Edition (CAS-2)
- Communication Matrix
- Communication & Symbolic Behavior Scales
- Receptive-Expressive Emergent Language Test, 3rd Edition – REEL-3


0.3-3.0 (years/months)

Identifies children deficient in cognitive development and provides a measure of performance for children who do not talk or whose speech is unintelligible.

Communication Matrix – Charity Rowland, 2011.

Profiles that allow parents and professionals to directly compare the information they have from home, school or clinic to provide a comprehensive portrait of a child’s communication skills. 2011 includes an online version.


A standardized tool designed to evaluate communication and symbolic abilities of children whose functional communication age is between 6 months and 2 years. Also used with preschool children whose chronological age is up to 5-6 years if their developmental level of functioning is younger than 24 months. Purpose: 1). screening identifies children at risk for developmental delay or disability who need a developmental evaluation; 2). determines if a child has delays in social communication, expressive speech/language, and symbolic functioning; 3). documents changes in social communication, expressive speech/language, and symbolic functioning over time.

Identifies infants and toddlers (birth to 3yrs.) who have language impairments or who have other disabilities that affect language development. Information is obtained based on a caregiver interview.
Opportunities

- Read a story
- Play a game
- Crafts
- Role play
- Real life experiences
- Classroom routines and curriculum

Thoughts to get started

Provide access to core vocabulary
- No tech, low tech, high tech

Don’t underestimate the amount of vocabulary needed
- Finding the balance between too few and too many takes some clinical judgment—there are no hard and fast rules.

Keep the process moving
- Add more so you can begin to expose them to new vocabulary. It’s a fluid process.

Provide frequent opportunities for core word practice

Expect to provide a lot of support:

It’s not about mastery
- We do more harm by restricting access to vocabulary than we do by giving them too many words.
Resources

PrAACtical AAC – Supports for language learning
http://praacticalaac.org/?s=teaching+core

Speak For Yourself
http://www.speakforyourself.org

American Speech & Hearing Association (ASHA)
http://asha.org