Practical ideas to address the Augmentative Alternative Communication (AAC) needs of Children with Disabilities during COVID-19

MassAdvocates Weekly Chat Series
June 4, 2020
Your child’s AAC may look like:

• Signing
• Pictures in a book
• An Ipad with speech technology
• Some other high technology system
Language is everywhere...
Building positive AAC habits

- Visibility
- Accountability
- Sustainability
Visibility = access

- Charging/checking it every night so that it’s ready the next day
- Putting in the same place every night
- Having AAC with the child wherever they travel
- Developing ownership
- Carrying it using strap/case/backpack
Accountability - using routines to increase AAC use

Think about what your child is already doing during the day

Where can AAC-language-routine connect?

Use printed photos or take pictures in the order they are going to happen on your phone

Ask school to help support carry-over
Sustainability – making AAC use successful for everyone!

- Choose words that are developmentally appropriate
  - [https://praacticalaac.org/praactical/aac-vocabulary-lists/](https://praacticalaac.org/praactical/aac-vocabulary-lists/)
- Choose words that are empowering and have immediate reward
- Choose words/items that will reduce tantrums – label emotions, provide support
- Collaborate with other caregivers, teachers, providers to prioritize words
- Model, Model, Model

GO! PUSH!

OUT! ALL DONE!

Nick Jr!

Turn on!
Working with your team

• Ask about virtual speech therapy
  • Provides an opportunity for in-home training/support
  • Virtual speech therapy is an appropriate option for many AAC users
  • Some schools offer virtual individual and social group type activities
  • Requires a caregiver to sit with child through a laptop, tablet or desktop computer.
  • Therapists can provide interactive activities allowing the child to actively participate

Example (free interactive sites for language):
  Boom learning: https://wow.boomlearning.com/
  Pinkcat games: https://www.pinkcatgames.com/
Establish team roles and responsibilities

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<th>Team chair:</th>
<th>Speech therapist/AAC consultant</th>
<th>Special Education staff/teacher</th>
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<tr>
<td>- Coordinates needs around IEP</td>
<td>- find AAC supports/trainings</td>
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<td>- consults on programming/content</td>
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<td>- helps with tech support</td>
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<td>- address communication goals on IEP</td>
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<td>• Helps modify assignments</td>
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<td>• Provides homework</td>
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<td>• Addresses other goals on IEP (including communication)</td>
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<td>• Provides advice around transitions, visual supports</td>
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Other ideas

• Decide with your team the best way to communicate and how often:
  • Zoom? Email? Phone?

• Ask for modified work to do at home- and instructions on how to include AAC in the assignments
  • Give feedback to the team on what’s working and what’s not

• Reach out to companies that make your child’s system – many offer free online trainings and ideas for home
Access online trainings and supports

DEVICE/APP

- TouchChat (Ipad)/ NovaChat: https://saltillo.com/training
- Proloquo2Go: https://www.assistiveware.com/blog/new-to-proloquo2go-training
- Tobiidynavox/Snap N Core: https://www.tobiidynavox.com/en-us/support-training/
- LAMP words for Life: https://aacapps.com/support

- General ideas for using AAC: www.praacticalaac.org
AAC-RELATED COVID RESOURCES

• Easter Seals. (March 2020). My Coronavirus Story. [Social Story with PCS symbols, PDF file]
• Gray, Carol. (March 2020). My Story About Pandemics and the Coronavirus. [Social Story, PDF file]
• Mowik. (March 2020). Pandemic symbols. [Symbol collection]
• Rankin, Kim. (March 2020). For Caregivers of AAC Users: Three Things to do at Home When School is Cancelled. [Blog post]
• Zangari, Carol. (March 2020). Dealing with COVID-19. [Website, curated list of resources]