

Part 3: Goal Setting

Augmentative and Alternative Communication for Autistic Individuals

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AutismONTARIO

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Training, Certifications, Publications:

- Augmentative & Alternative Communication (AAC)
- Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS)
- Paediatric Feeding Disorders
- Interprofessional Education & Practice

Conflict of Interest

- Salaried employee of Autism Ontario
- Clinical Advisor for Linggo
- Advisory Committee - ASAT

Statements

Language

- Identity-first (e.g., autistic person)
- Person-first (e.g., person with autism)

Use During the Presentation

- Both terms will be used interchangeably
- Respectful of all attendees and stakeholders – right to choose any label

Agenda

- Brief Review of AAC Assessment & Prerequisite Skills
- Answers from Assessment – Choosing the AAC system
- Determining Goals
 - Prerequisite Skills
 - Vocabulary Selection
- Challenges
- Resources and Supports

Who would benefit from AAC?

Approximately **25%-50% of individuals** with autism spectrum disorders (ASDs) remain minimally verbal throughout their lives, with **little or no functional speech**

([Rose et al., 2016](#), [Brignell et al., 2018](#))

What does the research say?

- [Lorah et al. \(2015\)](#) underscore the point that,

“the research is not about “iPads® as SGDs” but rather [it] is about the combination of hardware, software, and training protocols. All three must work together to provide support for the individuals...”



Assessment Information to Determine AAC System

Assessment Information

Sensory
impacts

Joint attention

Initiation &
Social approach

Early
communication
skills

Reinforcers &
Motivation

Rate of
Learning

Comprehension
skills

Imitation skills

Visual
discrimination
skills

Communication
functions

Vocal abilities

Age of the
Individual

Assessment for AAC

What are the steps in a good AAC assessment?

Determine the child's level of abilities in language, learning, motor, and sensory skills

Observe the child with various people and across places and settings

Involve the child, parents, caregivers, instructors, and/or others (e.g., SLP, BCBA, OT) for their goals and cultural or family needs

Complete a dynamic assessment - assesses the level of teaching / prompting needed and the type of materials required for learning

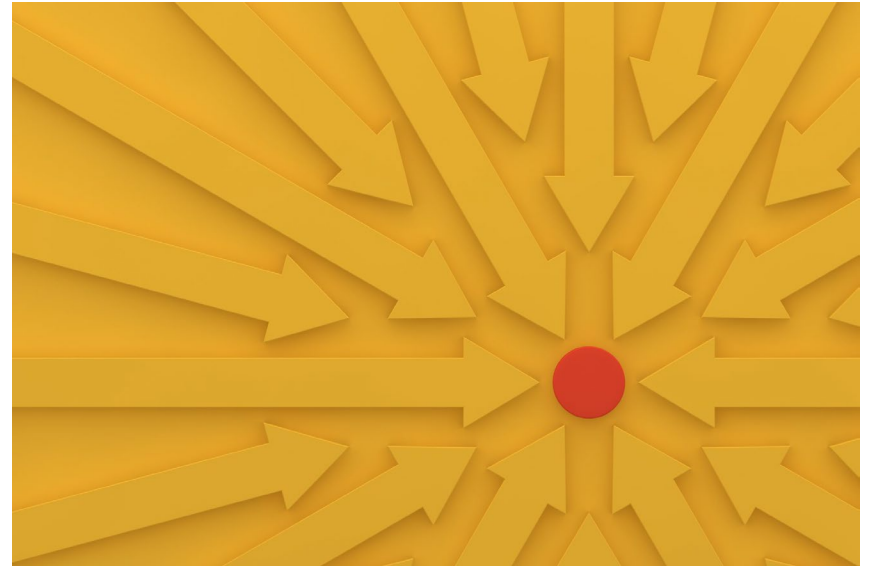
Conduct a 'feature matching' exercise to determine the top two or three systems (hardware & software, apps)

Trial each system to determine which is a good 'fit' and/or which the child prefers (or dislikes)

System Selection

- Match the skills and current strengths to the most appropriate AAC system
 - Choose the system that matches most closely
 - Consider the individual's motivation and reinforcers
 - Consider your family's values and wishes
 - Consider 'other' required resources – financial, programming/material development, training
 - Consider additional support required (BCBA, educator, AAC specialist, SLP)

How do I Choose Appropriate Goals?



AAC Assessment and Goal Development Checklist

Instructions:

1. Rate each **Skill** according to the likelihood that you would see that skill demonstrated on a daily basis or is evident through your child's daily behaviour. Put a check mark in the corresponding column (from 1 – Never observe to 5 – Always observe the skill).
2. Place a check mark under the 'REQUIRED GOAL' column if the rating is a 1, 2, or 3 for the skill (i.e., the skill requires development/teaching).
3. Specific teaching goals, for the specific AAC system chosen, should be developed to address each of the identified skills.

Skills Observed	Rate as	1 Never	2 Rarely	3 Sometimes	4 Often	5 Always	Required Goal
Sensory impacts – over responsiveness to touch, sound, and/or visual stimuli							
Joint Attention - looks at the object, at you, and back to the object again							
Social Approach – understands that you need to seek out a person to communicate or request something							
Early Communication Skills – pointing at objects/people, use of gestures, leading/pulling others to request something, standing next to items or activities as a request							
Reinforcers & Motivation – has numerous items and/or activities that my child seeks out for enjoyment; these items/activities come from a variety of categories (toys, food, drinks, places, activities, people)							

AAC Assessment and Goal Development Checklist

Skills Observed	Rate as	1 Never	2 Rarely	3 Sometimes	4 Often	5 Always	Required Goal
Learning Rate – learns new things quickly with only a few demonstrations or practice trials							
Comprehension – can understand simple 1-step and 2-step verbal instructions, out of routine, without additional gestures, prompts, or visual supports							
Imitation Skills – can easily and accurately copy gross motor (large movements) and fine motor (hand and finger) actions without specific instructions and assistance							
Visual Discrimination Skills – can understand pictures separately from <i>similar</i> pictures and understand that the picture ‘represents’ a real item, person, place, or activity							
Communication Functions – uses behaviour, gestures, and/or vocalizations or words to ask for things (make requests), show refusal/rejection (denial), show interest (comment), indicate ‘hi’ and ‘bye’ (greetings/closings), and ask and answer questions (conversation)							
Vocal Ability – can use a variety of consistent sounds, word approximations, or whole words to communicate their wants and needs							
Age – communicates and understands the communication of same-aged peers							

Goal Selection

1. Pre-requisite access skills

- Gross and fine motor skills required
- Motivation and reinforcers
- Delayed access to reinforcers
- Visual discrimination skills (making sense of pictures)

2. Vocabulary Selection

- Teach what matters ‘most’ to the individual ([Laubscher & Light, 2020](#))
- Teach words that can replace challenging behaviour

Challenges

Clinicians can become
'married' to a system
and not open to other
forms of AAC

Ongoing disagreements
about how best to
program, how to teach,
and what
layout/vocabulary is best

Professionals can
engage in 'turf wars'
around AAC



Providers who
specialize in AAC may
not have experience
with autism or vice
versa

Lots of AAC research with
few solid answers for
individuals with autism

Lots of claims in AAC
without supporting
research

**How can I
access AAC
services,
supports, and
funding?**



Accessing AAC Services, Supports, & Funding



Assessments

- [AAC Clinics in Ontario](#)

Professionals

- [OAP Provider List](#)
- [Speech-Language Pathologists](#)
- [Board Certified Behavior Analysts](#)

Accessing AAC Services, Supports, & Funding



Funding

- [Assistive Devices Program \(ADP\)](#) – communication aids
- Ontario Autism Program (OAP)
 - [One Time Interim Funding](#)
 - [Core Clinical Services](#) (with a prescription letter)
- Education – [Specialized Equipment Amount \(SEA\) claim](#)

Questions?

Upcoming Sessions:

Part 4: Introducing and Teaching AAC

- Feb. 22nd: 12:30 – 1 pm

Part 5: Problem Solving and Generalization

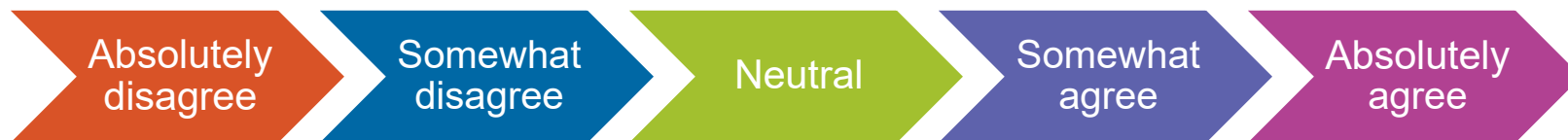
- March 9th: 12:30 – 1 pm

Parts 1 & 2 available on demand



Feedback Survey

- Please answer each question in the survey
- The questions include items with:
 - A Likert scale (i.e., a 5-point scale with a range of responses)



- Selecting only one answer (single answer)
- Selecting all answers that might apply (multiple selections)
- Text boxes where you type your answer

References

Brignell, A., Chenausky, K.V., Song, H., Zhu, J., Suo, C., & Morgan A.T. (2018). Communication interventions for autism spectrum disorder in minimally verbal children. *Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews*, Issue 1. Art. No.: CD012324.

<https://doi.org/10.1002/14651858.CD012324.pub2>

Laubscher, E. & Light, J. (2020). Core vocabulary lists for young children and considerations for early language development: a narrative review, *Augmentative and Alternative Communication*, 36:1, 43-53, [DOI:](#)

[10.1080/07434618.2020.1737964](https://doi.org/10.1080/07434618.2020.1737964)

References

Lorah, E.R., Parnell, A., Whitby, P.S., Schaefer Whitby, P., & Hantula, D. (2015). A Systematic Review of Tablet Computers and Portable Media Players as Speech Generating Devices for Individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder. *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*, 45(12), pp. 3792-3804.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10803-014-2314-4>

References

McNaughton, D., & Light, J. (2015). What We Write about When We Write About AAC: The Past 30 Years of Research and Future Directions. *Augment Altern Commun.* 31(4):261-70.

DOI: [10.3109/07434618.2015.1099736](https://doi.org/10.3109/07434618.2015.1099736).

Rose, V., Trembath, D., Keen, D., & Paynter, J. (2016). The proportion of minimally verbal children with autism spectrum disorder in a community-based early intervention programme. *J Intellect Disabil Res.* May;60(5):464-77. [doi: 10.1111/jir.12284](https://doi.org/10.1111/jir.12284).

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