

# Just Talk

Practical Strategies for  
Developing Functional  
Communication Using AAC

## Who we are

SLP's from the Augmentative Communication  
and Learning Enhancement (ACLE) Program  
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## Why use AAC?

- Not just for requesting and responding!!!
- To communicate
- To learn
- To participate
- To increase speech
- To increase language
- To demonstrate knowledge

## Teaching AAC strategies

- Why?
  - "Technology alone does not make a competent communicator any more than a piano makes a musician or a basketball and a hoop make an athlete." (Beukelman & Mirenda, 1998)
  - The goal of AAC should be "the most effective interactive communication possible" (Hill, 2005; On-line: [www.asha.org](http://www.asha.org))
- How?
  - Need to know in order to teach (i.e., take a hands-on, exploratory approach to learn systems)
  - Just use good language therapy; in normal language development, children begin using individual words and word combinations; AAC uses the same basic rules (Hill, 2005)

## Why teach communication partners to use facilitative strategies?

- Research Findings on Communication Partner Characteristics (Light, Collier & Parnes, 1985)
  - Take most turns
  - Provide few opportunities for communication
  - Ask mostly Yes/No questions
  - Interrupt turns of AAC users
  - Focus on technology vs. person
- Explicit instruction is needed (Angelo & Goldstein, 1990; Basil, 1992; Light, Dattilo, English, Gutierrez & Hartz, 1992; Udwin & Yule, 1991)
  - After instruction, interactions are more reciprocal, and less dominated by the speaking partner
  - After First Steps Camp (2006) parent feedback indicated need for hands-on experiences and direct instruction

## Identify your Expectations

- **Beginner/Emergent:** learning to identify symbols or auditory cues, learning what vocabulary is available, learning to navigate
- **Intermediate/Supported:** knows where to look for vocabulary, self-corrects, uses multiple strategies to get point across
- **Advanced/Independent:** uses more complex language, needs to generalize skills to natural conversations, with a range of partners, in multiple environments

## Cueing Strategies used by Communication Partners

- Provide increased opportunities for communication (Light, Dattilo, English, Gutierrez & Hartz, 1992)
- Wait time/Expectant Delay (Angelo & Goldstein, 1990; Light & Binger, 1996)
- Aided Language Stimulation (Goosens', Crain & Elder, 1992)
- Augmented Input & Re-casting (Lund & Light, 2003)
- Support with navigation (Light, 2005)
- Sabotage/Communication Temptations (Wetherby & Prizant, 1989)
- Peer Partners/Modeling (Buzolich & Lunger, 1995)
- Open-ended Questions (Basil, 1992; Bruno & Dribbon, 1998)
- Natural Conversation, Pragmatic Cues, Topic Cues

## Communication Functions

- **Gaining Attention**
  - 12-24 mos. (Rowland 1990)
- **Greetings/Closings**
  - 12-18 mos. (Rowland 1990)
- **Directing**
  - 24-36 mos. (Rossetti, 2005; Warren & McCloskey, 1997)
- **Commenting**
  - 18-24 mos. (Rowland, 1990)
- **Choice Making/Requesting**
  - 12-14 mos. (Rowland, 1990)

## Communication Functions

- **Asking/Questioning**
  - By 36 mos. comprehension of most Wh-questions (James, 1990)
- **Demonstrating knowledge and/or sharing information**
  - 24-36 mos. (Warren & McCloskey, 1997 Rossetti, 2005)
- **Protesting**
  - 12-24 mos. (Rossetti, 2005; Rowland, 1990)
- **Repairing Communication Breakdown**
  - 2-3 yrs. Repetition (Hegde, 1996)

## Objectives - Gaining Attention

- **Beginner/Emergent:** Joe will gain attention of peers prior to each turn (in 80% of given opportunities with minimal verbal cueing over 3 consecutive sessions)
- **Intermediate/Supported:** Joe will gain attention of peers within a structured activity (in 80% of given opportunities with minimal verbal cueing over 3 consecutive sessions)
- **Advanced:** Joe will gain attention of peers during a conversation (in 80% of given opportunities with minimal verbal cueing over 3 consecutive sessions)

## Activities – Gaining Attention

- **Beginner/Emergent**– “Watch me” with marble maze, ball, etc.
  - Cue: Partner takes turns with child gaining attention of 3<sup>rd</sup> party.
- **Intermediate/Supported** – “Hey! Come here.” with a structured game (e.g., Secret Squares)
  - Cue: At child's turn, partner turns away and waits for child to initiate.
- **Advanced** – “Excuse me.” walking down the hallway (e.g., sabotage)
  - Cue: Partner purposely creates a barrier to interfere with the route.

## Objectives – Social Exchanges

- **Beginner/Emergent:** Weston will use social greetings/closings with peers (in 80% of given opportunities with minimal verbal cueing over 3 consecutive sessions)
- **Intermediate/Supported:** Weston will initiate turn-taking with peers within a structured activity (in 80% of given opportunities with minimal verbal cueing over 3 consecutive sessions)
- **Advanced:** Weston will initiate turn-taking with peers during a conversation (in 80% of given opportunities with minimal verbal cueing over 3 consecutive sessions)

## Activities – Social Exchanges

- **Beginner/Emergent** – “Hi there!” with new partners, peers, opening circle time, Peek-a-Boo
  - Cue: Partner gains eye-contact and waves to child; hides away
- **Intermediate/Supported** – “Hi! How are you?” within a role-play activities (e.g., dress-up, puppet play, dolls)
  - Cue: Practice entry/exit contexts: asking/answering; commenting, increasing turns on topic
- **Advanced** – Detailed partner-focused questions “Tell me more about yourself. What do you like to do?”; Conversation Starters game; Hollywood High; E-mail Listservs (AACsmalltalk in Yahoo! Groups; ACOLUG);
  - Cue: Introduce new partners,

## Objectives - Directing

- **Beginner/Emergent**: Cierra will direct play within a structured activity (50% of the time with moderate verbal and visual cueing over 3 consecutive sessions)
- **Intermediate/Supported**: Cierra will direct play within an unstructured activity (50% of the time with moderate verbal and visual cueing over 3 consecutive sessions)
- **Advanced**: Cierra will direct play by generating phrases in an unstructured activity (50% of the time with moderate verbal and visual cueing over 3 consecutive sessions)

## Activities - Directing

- **Beginner/Emergent** – Red Light Green Light, Simon Says, doll play (single actor, few actions)
  - Cue: “What is he going to do now?”
- **Intermediate/Supported** – Charades, Living Books, 1<sup>st</sup> 1000 Words, Guess Where, Kid Pix (multiple actors, multiple contexts)
  - Cue: “What should happen next?”
- **Advanced** - Hollywood High, Stanley Sticker Stories (identify or generate multiple actors, multiple contexts)
  - Cue: “What else could happen?”

## Objectives – Demonstrating Knowledge / Sharing Information

- **Beginner/Emergent**: Chris will use content/describing words to tell about current activities (with 80% accuracy given minimal verbal cues over 3 consecutive sessions)
- **Intermediate/Supported**: Chris will use phrases to describe events/stories of recent activities (with 80% accuracy given moderate cues over 3 consecutive sessions)
- **Advanced**: Chris will describe events/stories to present new information (with 80% accuracy given minimal cues over 3 consecutive sessions)

## Activities - Demonstrating Knowledge/ Sharing Information

- **Beginner/Emergent**: Toy Car (fast/slow), Circle Time Activities, Today’s Journal, Mad Libs
  - Cues: Cloze Task: fill in the blank with sentence context, provide topic cues, remove topic cues
- **Intermediate/Supported**: Re-tell events/stories; Create Mad Libs; Book Report
  - Cues: Wh-questions, Cloze Task: complete the sentence or complete the story, Main Idea, Main Actor, Main Event, Resolution
- **Advanced**: Write/Re-write stories, Generate Accounts
  - Cues: Open-ended questions, Beginning, Middle, Ending

## Objectives - Commenting

- **Beginner/Emergent**: Max will provide a positive/negative comment within an activity (80% of the time with a minimal verbal cue over 3 consecutive sessions).
- **Intermediate/Supported**: Max will comment within a structured activity (80% of the time with a minimal verbal cue over 3 consecutive sessions).
- **Advanced**: Max will comment in a conversation with peers (80% of the time with a minimal verbal cue over 3 consecutive sessions).

## Activities - Commenting

- **Beginner/Emergent:** "Yay!" "High 5!" "Yuck!"
  - Cue: "What do you think? Find your comments."
- **Intermediate:** Conversation Starter Game; Positive ("Cool" "That's great!"), neutral ("Really?" "that's interesting"), negative (e.g., "Sorry about that" "Too bad")
  - Cue: "What do you think about that? Make a comment."
- **Advanced:** Within natural conversations with peers
  - Cue: "What do you think about Sam's news?"

## Objectives – Choice Making/Requesting

- **Beginner/Emergent:** Laney will request from a field of 2 choices (80% of the time with moderate verbal cues 3 consecutive sessions).
- **Intermediate/Supported:** Laney will request from a field of 4+ objects/activities presented (80% of the time with moderate verbal cues 3 consecutive sessions).
- **Advanced:** Laney will independently initiate requests for objects/activities (80% of the time over 3 consecutive sessions).

## Activities - Choice Making/Requesting

- **Beginner/Emergent** – snack foods, play centers, toys, choices within daily routine (e.g., dressing)
  - Cue: "Here are some pretzels and some crackers. Which do you want?"
- **Intermediate/Supported** – Shopping/Go Fish/Farm Bingo (e.g., "Do you have \_\_\_?"), Ordering Food (e.g., Ice cream shop)
  - Cue: "Look, she has something that you want. Ask her."
- **Advanced** – Community Group Planning
  - Cue: "You can pick. Just ask."

## Objectives - Protesting

- **\*\*\*Replace challenging behaviors with communication!\*\*\***
- **Beginner/Emergent:** Zach will protest using appropriate language (e.g., SGD, sign language) (80% of given opportunities with a maximum visual and verbal cue over 3 consecutive sessions).
- **Intermediate/Supported:** Zach will protest in structured activities (80% of given opportunities with a moderate visual and verbal cue over 3 consecutive sessions).
- **Advanced:** Zach will protest in conversations (80% of given opportunities with a maximum visual and verbal cue).

## Activities – Protesting

- **Beginner/Emergent** – Use boring games/objects... "I don't like that" "no + book"
  - Cue: "You're pushing it away. You can say...(hand over hand)"
- **Intermediate/Supported** – sabotage Secret Squares... "Don't look!"
  - Cue: "Make him stop looking!"
- **Advanced** – Discuss problems... "I don't want to." "That makes me mad." "That's not cool."
  - Cue: "If you don't like it, say something!"

## Objectives - Questioning

- **Beginner/Emergent:** Emma will ask simple Wh-questions in a structured activity (70% of the time with a moderate verbal and visual cue over 3 consecutive sessions).
- **Intermediate/Supported:** Emma will generate Wh- or Yes/No questions in a structured activity (70% of the time with a moderate verbal and visual cue over 3 consecutive sessions).
- **Advanced:** Emma will ask questions in conversation (70% of the time with a moderate verbal and visual cue over 3 consecutive sessions).

## Activities - Questioning

- **Beginner/Emergent** – Hidden objects in Easter Eggs, Magic Box, Cards (withhold identity, control materials to prevent exploring)
  - Cue: "Hey there's something in there! I wonder what?"
- **Intermediate/Supported** – Show and Tell, Guess Who, Guess Where, Secret Squares
  - Cue: Start with "do you have..."
- **Advanced** – Conversation
  - Cue: "I have big news!" "Something happened...."

## Objectives – Terminating/Refusing

- **Beginner/Emergent:** Joe will terminate an activity appropriately to complete an interaction (80% of the time with a moderate verbal cue over 3 consecutive sessions).
- **Intermediate/Supported:** Joe will terminate an activity appropriately at the time of completion (80% of the time with a moderate verbal cue over 3 consecutive sessions).
- **Advanced:** Joe will terminate a conversation appropriately with peers in a community setting (80% of the time with a minimal verbal cue over 3 consecutive sessions).

## Activities – Terminating/Refusing

- **Beginner/Emergent** – at completion of game, point of boredom... "stop", "all done", wave bye
  - Cue: "Do you want *more* or *all done*?"
- **Intermediate/Supported** – role play conversations, computer
  - Cue: "What do you say if it's time to stop?"
- **Advanced** – "goodbye" category (e.g., See ya, I'm out of here, Later, Adios, I better go, etc.)
  - Cue: "Well, it's about time to wrap up."

## Objectives – Communication Breakdown

- **Beginner/Emergent:** Ali will use corrective feedback to repair a communication breakdown in a conversation (80% of the time given moderate cues over 3 consecutive sessions).
- **Intermediate/Supported:** Ali will use strategies to prevent a communication breakdown with peers in a conversation (80% of the time given moderate cues over 3 consecutive sessions).
- **Advanced:** Ali will compensate during a communication breakdown with peers in a community environment (80% of the time given minimal cues over 3 consecutive sessions).

## Activities - Communication Breakdown

- **Beginner/Emergent** – Anything! Describing Games, synonyms (memory, categories)
  - Cue: "Dog. Is that what you wanted to say?"
- **Intermediate/Supported** – ("Wait, I'll find the words." "It's not in my talker." "What? Can you say that again?", "I'll tell you the topic" etc.)
  - Cue: "Do you have a way to say what you want?"
- **Advanced** - phonemic cueing, semantic/topic cueing, place-holding strategies, spelling
  - Cue: "Try to say it a different way."

## Games

- Secret Squares
- Guess Who? / Where?
- Conversation Starters
- Wheels on the Bus
- Mystery Person Game
- Farm Bingo / Bingo Bears
- Go Fish
- Go for the Dough
- What's in Ned's Head?
- Memory
- Manipulative Books
- Assembly Activities – potato head, dress up, puzzles
- Musical Chairs
- Role playing
- Stanley Sticker Stories
- Kid Pix; Writing With Symbols; PixWriter Software
- Living Books, Story Q&A
- Hollywood High CD-ROM
- Mad Libs
- Ukandu Little Books

## Just Talk – Clinician’s Role

- Summary
  - Identify the individual’s current level of functioning (beginner/emergent, intermediate/supported, advanced)
  - Specify the communication function. (e.g., comment, protest, etc.)
  - Specify the context (e.g., structured, conversation)
  - Set up activities and situations that promote use of communication functions naturally
  - Determine your cueing strategies
  - Work towards generalizing to natural conversation

## Contact Information

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