

My Student has a Communication Device.....Now What?



Back to school means a class of new students. Whether you're a veteran teacher or new to the field, having a student in your class who uses Augmentative and Alternative Communication or "AAC" can raise a lot of questions....*How does he communicate? How does she interact with her peers? How can I make him part of my class?* Many talented, experienced teachers have simply not had the experience of working with students with complex communication needs. Whatever your level of experience, hopefully considering the following points will get your class off to a great start this year!

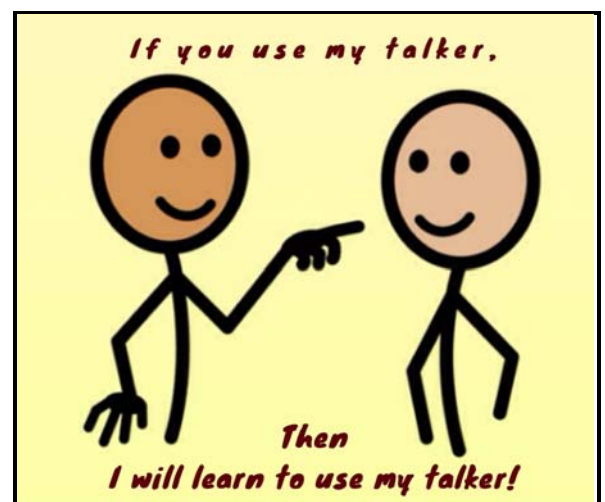
1. Honor every communication act.

The first step to successful use of AAC is the student's understanding that interacting with the device accomplishes

something. When they use it, even if they're just "playing," respond to their output as though it were intentional. This helps them to develop the cause and effect relationship that enables them to see their AAC as a means of communication.

2. Model, model, model!

Young children typically learn to use language by watching others use language. They are given many opportunities to practice their skills in a safe and supportive environment and receive hours and hours of appropriate models. Students who use AAC also need language models, however the modeling that they receive should be in the same modality that they are expected to use. Simply highlight the key words from your message on their device while speaking. For example, you could say "Let's play ball," while using the student's device to highlight the words, PLAY and BALL.



When modeling, do not require the student to communicate, direct them to generate language or ask questions; the intention is for them to begin to imitate the communication behavior they observe. A short video demonstration of modeling or aided language input can be found at the following link:

<http://screencast.com/t/dNshNa5Bf>

3. Wait expectantly and provide the student with enough time to communicate.

Students who can speak can often carry on conversations, interrupt and interject with great speed. Students who use AAC devices communicate at a much slower rate. You must allow time for the communication messages to be sent and received; in doing so, you increase opportunities for communication. This strategy is best achieved by providing extra pause time (10-15 seconds). You can also look at the student with your eyebrows raised to let them know that you are waiting for them to have a turn. Silences can be uncomfortable, but are definitely worth it when supporting students who use AAC!



4. Respond to the student's communicative attempts, confirming the intended message and clarifying meaning if necessary.

By recognizing and acknowledging all the different ways that a student communicates and expanding their utterances by providing appropriate and consistent responses, you support the development of new skills. For example, if the student presses "eat" on their device, you could respond immediately and positively by saying, "Yes, let's eat cake!" while pressing *eat* and *cake* on the device as a model.

5. Use the device consistently across all contexts.

As much as possible, ensure that the student has access to their device everywhere they go. In situations where weather or mobility may restrict access, screen shots of the primary communication pages from the student's device are an effective low-tech AAC tool to use in its place. as a model.

6. Provide frequent opportunities for communication.

All students need opportunities to communicate their thoughts and ideas in order to learn and develop. Unlike most speaking students, students who use AAC devices may not be able to initiate, get attention, or interrupt others if they are motivated to say something. In addition to giving them time to respond (i.e. waiting expectantly), you may need to structure communication situations with a shared focus of attention, so students have many chances to communicate and interact. By creating communication opportunities in daily classroom routines, the student will have regular chances to interact.

7. Foster social interaction.

Students using an AAC device may need extra support accessing communication partners and getting involved in motivating activities. Teach the other students how to talk to, understand and respond to the student using a device. Classmates can often find creative ways for the student using AAC to participate in activities and are oftentimes more motivating communication partners than adults.



8. Expect successful communication.

When we have a conversation with a speaking child, we expect interaction and responses. We must have the same expectations for students who use AAC. Expectation is a critical component of a successful communication partnership. If we expect participation, we increase the chance that it will happen (assume competence).



Good byes

We say good bye to our AAC AT teacher Lori Hughes. We know the students, families and school teams appreciated Lori's depth of knowledge and passion supporting students with speech generating communication devices (SGCD) and their literacy needs. Bonnie Lynn David will be providing coverage for the

classroom until we are able to post this position for the next school year.

Physical therapist, Janice Nunweiler, has recently retired and she is happily exploring the life as a "retiree". Janice's expertise in complex power mobility systems has enabled numerous Albertans to be independent in driving their power wheelchairs. The I CAN team is very fortunate to have Elaine Bragg as our physical therapist providing complex power mobility assessments.

Celebrate

The Speech Generating Communication Device (SGCD) benefit has moved from a pilot benefit to a permanent benefit of the Alberta Aids to Daily Living (AADL) program effective December 1, 2014. To learn more about this benefit go to <http://www.health.alberta.ca/services/aids-to-daily-living.html>

The AADL website will provide further information about this benefit area.

Changes

There are changes in how the I CAN Centre will be collecting payment for workshop registrations. The only payment method accepted is online with a credit card. We are unable to take payment through mail or phone; and payment by cheque or cash is not accepted. Registration for I CAN Centre workshops requires the participant to complete the I CAN **Registration Form** with the **transaction ID** filled in. The transaction ID is provided when the participant goes online to pay for the workshop. The completed Registration Form with the transaction ID **must be sent to the I CAN Centre.**

I CAN Centre for Assistive Technology

Education Calendar

January 2015

All sessions held at the I CAN Centre, Glenrose Rehabilitation Hospital Room 38

Thursday January 22, 2015 1:00-3:30 pm (Check in 12:45 pm)

AAC -- Technology Free! Course Number 220115

Complex technology can be very expensive, but simple and effective strategies for enhancing communication are *FREE!* Come to this half-day session to learn readily-available “tech-free” methods of augmentative and alternative communication (AAC). Explore no-tech, light-tech, and partner-enhanced strategies for communication. Geared towards clinicians with caseloads of preschool and school-aged children, topics include:

- Consideration of AAC Strategies as part of an overall communication plan.
- Evaluating communication and language with or without standardized tests.
- Practical strategies, goals, and guidelines for partner-enhanced communication.
- Examples of easy, free, AAC systems with readily available resources.
- Referring? Let your “Why” direct When, How, and to Whom.

Registration: Required

Fee: \$50.00

Registration Deadline: 16 January 2015

February 2015

Monday February 2, 2015 1:00-3:30 pm (Check in 12:45 pm)

Satisfy Your APPetite* for AAC Course Number 020215

Hungry for AAC apps? The list of over 330 AAC apps* is growing all the time. Different apps have different features for different needs. We'll sample from the wide selection of AAC apps, each representing one of 7 basic AAC app groups: Spelling with Word Prediction; Core Word vocabulary; Activity-Based words and phrases; Participation with Scripted Messages; Simple Choice Making; Visual Scene Displays; and Positive Behavior Supports. By the end of the session, participants will be able to:

- Identify the typical features of the seven AAC app categories.
- Categorize an AAC app according to its intended purpose.
- Match a hypothetical client profile to one of the 7 AAC app groups.

*Source: <http://www.janefarrall.com/aac-apps-lists> (retrieved Nov 27, 2014)

Registration: Required

Fee: \$50.00

Registration Deadline: 26 January 2015

Friday March 20, 2015 1:00-3:30 pm **(Check in 12:45 pm)**

WordQ, SpeakQ and ThoughtQ Course Number 200315

WordQ and SpeakQ integrate word prediction, text to voice, and voice recognition, and are used as tools to provide reading and writing support designed for struggling writers. WordQ and SpeakQ offer 21st Century Learners the tool for effective communication through writing. ThoughtQ is a tool to help learners expand understanding of a topic by providing a list of "connected" ideas/words.

21st Century Learners are accustomed to searching for information online, however, how many of them re-write Wikipedia, or simply get overwhelmed by the vast amount of information displayed? In this session, participants will explore the use of ThoughtQ as an effective tool to gather information for essays and reports with less effort and in less time, while gaining greater knowledge. Once armed with the information needed, WordQ+SpeakQ can support the student through the writing process.

Guided by the Universal Design for Learning Framework, Lisa Boone will lead participants through exploring ThoughtQ, WordQ & SpeakQ through a typical classroom research project to support a diversity of student needs.

Learning Objectives:

- 1) Basic understanding of ThoughtQ and it's application to 21st Century Learners
- 2) Basic understanding of the features within WordQ & SpeakQ

Lisa Boone is the representative for Western Canada of Strategic Transitions Inc, an international, visual and digital learning specialist company based out of Ontario. Lisa, has worked with literacy support software for more years than she likes to admit to. She is passionate about helping students demonstrate their knowledge so they can reach their highest potential.

Registration: Required Send completed registration form to the I CAN Centre, no online payment required.

Fee: No fee

Registration Deadline: 13 March 2015

Education Activities at the I CAN Centre

Please note that the deadline for course registrations is one week prior to the course date. We reserve the right to cancel a workshop if there is insufficient registration. Courses will be offered if there are ten or more registrants. Registration receipts will be available on the day of the workshop. Please advise the Centre if you need accommodations for special needs.

Important Information about Public Parking

Glenrose Underground Parkade on 111th Avenue

Credit card/coin: \$2.00/half-hour

Daily parking passes for 8 hours: \$14.25 from the Pay and Display Machine in the Underground Parkade

Descriptions of products in the TechTalk Newsletter do not imply endorsement by the I CAN Centre for Assistive Technology.
The Centre has no commercial links with any company or manufacturer.

I CAN Centre for Assistive Technology

www.albertahealthservices.ca/icancentre.asp



Name: _____ Agency Name: _____

Address: _____ City: _____ Prov: _____ P. Code: _____

Phone: _____ Fax: _____

Email: _____ (print email address legibly)

Please add my email address (above) to the I CAN mailing list

Course Name: _____

Payment

Pay online by credit card at www.albertahealthservices.ca/pay. When paying online use routing code **5600**. Please ensure you still submit this form when paying online and enter the transaction ID found on your e-mail invoice here _____ for ease of tracking payment to your request.

***Payment cannot be accepted at the I CAN Centre. Cash and or cheque payments are no longer accepted. Payment by credit card can only be done online.**

***For telehealth, please contact the I CAN Centre to see if telehealth is available.**

For telehealth only registration, please identify:

Telehealth Site (Hospital, school name): _____

Address: _____

Telehealth contact person: _____ Phone: _____

Email contact information: _____

Mail, fax or email registration form to: **Audrey Synowec, I CAN Centre
Glenrose Rehabilitation Hospital
10230 - 111 Avenue Edmonton, AB T5G 0B7
Phone: 780-735-6070 • Fax: 780-735-6072
Email: icancentre@albertahealthservices.ca**