AAC & Implementation Science:

What to Try When Buy-In Seems Impossible

Hello!

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Disclosures

- Financial
  - Salary from Columbia College
  - Royalties from Speech and Language Songs
- Non-Financial
  - Member of ASHA and SCSHA

Learning Objectives

- Participants will be able to:
  - Define AAC and Implementation Science Terminology.
  - Design AAC Implementation Plans that are individualized for each client.
  - Apply Implementation Science principles in their clinical practice.

Implementation Science

"The latest research shows that we really should do something with all this research."

What is Implementation Science?

- "application and integration of research evidence into practice and policy."
  - (Glasgow, Eckstein, and ElZarrad, 2013)

What is Implementation Science?

- "applied research that aims to develop the critical evidence base that informs the effective, sustained and embedded adoption of interventions by health systems and communities."
  - (Allottey et al, 2008)

The Know-Do Gap

- The field of implementation science seeks to systematically close the gap between what we *know* and what we *do* by identifying and addressing the barriers that prevent the application of evidence based practices.

How do we close the Know-Do Gap?

It's not about US!

It takes 50-150 models of a word or phrase on the student's device before the student uses that word or phrase on their device.

-Gail Van Tatenhove (2006)

Where do we start?

What is Communication?

- Effective communication is the outcome measure of what we do as SLPs; facilitating these skills throughout our client's day.
- If we're focusing on communication, we have a clear understanding of what we're trying to achieve.

13

Focus on communication NOT technology.

What Does a Successful AAC Communicator Look Like?

15

Successful AAC Communicators

- Focus on communication - not technology
- Experience implementation as an on-going, dynamic team process
- Use multiple modalities
- Participate in active learning
- Learn language through natural immersion in language
- Find a balance if significant multiple challenges are present
- Remain motivated - it's key!(Linda Burkhart)

16

Factors of Success for Beginning AAC Communicators and Partners

Motivation of AAC User
To Pursue Task
_____
Physical Effort +
Cognitive Effort +
Time Load +
Linguistic (Language) Effort

= Success or Failure of AAC Use

17

Who communicates with AAC users?

18

Communication Partners

- Parents
- Siblings
- Significant Others
- Peers
- Teachers
- Therapists
- Paraprofessionals
- Medical Personnel
- General School Staff
- Colleagues
- Community Members

19

Family-Centered

20

Collaborating with Families

- Highly Significant Role
- Long-Term
- Contemporary Families

21

Families Finding Homeostasis

- Homeostasis
- Adaptation

22

Family-Centered Services

- The basis of family-centered services is the development of a partnership where families and professionals work collaboratively to solve problems and make decisions.

23

Family-Centered Services

- Result in greater family satisfaction with services, stronger self-efficacy beliefs within the family, increased family involvement, greater family empowerment, improved family ratings of the helpfulness of supports and resources, improved behavior and functioning, and increased family and individual well-being.

24

Family-Centered Services

- Two types of practices are integral to the delivery of family-centered services:
  - Relational Practices
  - Participatory Practices

Relational Practices

- Active listening
- Demonstrating compassion, empathy, and respect
- Maintaining effective communication
- Holding positive beliefs and attitudes about family strengths and capabilities

Participatory Practices

- Include those that actively involve family members in decision making, utilize existing family strengths, and develop family capabilities to be actively involved.

LAFF Don't CRY

LAFF

- Listen and communicate respect
- Ask open-ended questions to learn more
- Focus on the issues
- Find a first step

Listen and Communicate Respect

- The primary goal of active listening is to develop a positive relationship with the communication partner.
  - Step 1 - Listen to concern, without comment or instructing a solution
  - Step 2 - Make a statement of empathy
  - Step 3 - Communicate respect by thanking them for bringing up this concern

Ask Open-Ended Questions to Learn More

- Good questions can gather more information on how the communication partner sees the problem.
- By understanding this, you can ensure you understand the communication partner's concerns and expectations BEFORE providing solutions or next steps.

31

Focus on the Issues

- Once sufficient information has been gathered, shift focus to the issues.
- Carefully review the information and check for accuracy. Checking for accuracy ensures there are not gaps in understanding or expectations.
- This also provides evidence that the SLP was truly listening to the communication partner.

32

Find a First Step

- Consider all the information and think about next steps.
- Identify a reasonable first step for all parties that moves us closer to our shared long-term goal.

33

Scenario 1

- The AAC user is a patient with ALS. The communication partner is their significant other. The communication partner doesn't understand why the AAC device is being prescribed. The AAC user is still intelligible but their wpm is currently 60 and dropping quickly. The communication partner is overwhelmed and frustrated.

34

Scenario 2

- The AAC user is an autistic child. The communication partner is their mother. The child has used their AAC device successfully for the past 2 years. The communication partner is angry that she is adding personalized words within the device but they are being deleted at therapy. The application is LAMP Words for Life and the SLP knows that the words already exist elsewhere within the device and the AAC user just needs to be shown where they are rather than randomly adding new icons unnecessarily.

35

Don't CRY!

- Criticize people who aren't present
- React hastily and promise something you can't deliver
  - "Check yourself before you wreck yourself." - Ice Cube
- Yakety-yak-yak

36

LAFF DON'T CRY!

- Do
  - Listen and communicate respect
  - Ask open-ended questions to learn more
  - Focus on the issues
  - Find a first step
- Don't
  - Criticize people who aren't present
  - React hastily and promise something you can't deliver
  - Yakety-yak-yak

37

Effective Communication Partner Tips

38

Effective Communication Partners

- Interact at eye level
- Pay close attention to facial expressions, eye gaze, body posture, and gestures and respond appropriately
- If you don't understand, admit it
- Repeat and confirm messages
- Talk directly to the person

39

Effective Communication Partners

- Promote use of the AAC device by:
  - Making sure parents, SLPs, and teachers have access to account info for the app
  - Update pages as needed
  - Making backups of AAC pages when changes are made
  - Track usage data

40

Effective Communication Partners

- Promote peer interactions. Try a "buddy" system.
- It can be very motivating to see another AAC user with their AAC system in use.

41

Aided Language Input (Stimulation)

- A communication strategy that requires a communication partner to teach symbol meaning and model symbolic communication by pairing speech with graphic symbols or other forms of aided augmentative and alternative communication (AAC).
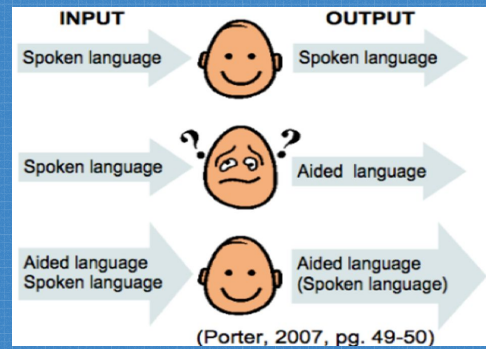
42

Aided Language Input (Stimulation)

- Aided Language Input shows WHERE graphic symbols are located and HOW they can be used to communicate various messages.

Aided Language Input (Stimulation)

(Porter, 2007, pg. 49-50)

SMoRRES

SMoRRES

- Slow Rate
- Model
- Respect and Reflect
- Repeat
- Expand
- Stop

Developed by Jill Senner and Matthew Baud

Slow Rate

- Use a slow speech rate
- Speak in slow, clearly articulated manner

Model

- Say words/phrases that are related to the contextual information available while simultaneously pointing to pictures on the child's board or device
- Parallel Talk - Describing what the student is doing as he or she is doing it
- Self Talk - Talking about what you're doing as you're doing it
- Think about modeling as providing the color commentary for ongoing classroom activities

Respect and Reflect

- Provide the words to code the child's wants, feelings, and intended messages.
- When the child communicates something through gesture or word approximation, model a word or phrase to communicate the same thought or feeling without making the child repeat him or herself on the device.
- For example, if the child points to a water fountain, the adult might model: "Drink. Want drink."

49

Repeat

- Frequently repeat utterances
- When you model a sentence, say it again. It's OK to vary how you say it (e.g. "I want a red balloon," "A red balloon, please").

50

Expand

- Repeat and rephrase, building upon your own single word utterances by adding one to two words to provide a more complete phrase or sentence.
- You can build upon the child's communication, as well (i.e. if they use one word or symbol such as "Bubble" try expanding the comment to two or three words, for example, "Big Bubble," or "Blow a big bubble").

51

Stop

- Provide an expectant pause to allow the child time to respond. Count to 10 (or longer) in your head after you model a phrase to give the child an opportunity to take a turn in the conversation.

52

Don't forget wait time!

- Necessary for AAC users!
  - Conversational speech is 150-250 wpm
  - Average typing speed is 41 wpm
  - Average AAC speed is 25 wpm

53

Supporting AAC is a Piece of CAKE

- Connect
- Acknowledge
- Keep Modeling
- Encourage & Entice

Created by @Miss.D.SLP

54

Supporting AAC is a Piece of CAKE

- Connect with your AAC user above all else! Communication doesn't happen without connection & trust, so take the time to build those relationships. Communication is about connection over compliance!

Supporting AAC is a Piece of CAKE

- Acknowledge all communication attempts, even if you think they are "off-topic" or you're unsure of the meaning. Our students can't learn to communicate if their attempts aren't being acknowledged. Let's teach our AAC users that their communication has power!

Supporting AAC is a Piece of CAKE

- Keep Modeling - Even if you feel like it's not working, it is! Keep modeling language using the AAC user's communication system. It's OK to start small, but our goal is to work up to 200x/day! Remember to model all communication functions, not just requesting!

Supporting AAC is a Piece of CAKE

- Encourage & Entice communication, but don't demand or require it. Entice natural communication by using highly engaging, motivating and fun activities. This will look different based on each student's interests and personality!

Barriers to Implementation

Barriers

- Policy
- Practice
- Attitude
- Knowledge
- Skill

Policy Barriers

- Policies that are in place that hinder AAC adoption and use
- Laws and regulations that support the rights of individuals who rely on AAC
  - IDEA
  - ADA
  - The Tech Act
- Are these being followed?

Practice Barriers

- Many schools, places of employment, and communities have practices in place that limit the participation of individuals with disabilities and their families.

Attitude Barriers

- Attitudes that restrict or prevent communication participation

Knowledge Barriers

- Stem from a lack of information on the part of family members or other communication partners that minimizes opportunities for communication by the person with complex communication needs
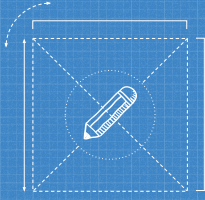
Skill Barriers

- Occur when communication partners have difficulty with actual communicative interactions with individuals who rely on AAC
- They can occur even when family members and other communication partners have knowledge of AAC

Next Steps?

- Pennsylvania Training and Technical Assistance Network (PaTTAn) Learning Modules
- MASTER PAL Series
- Attend a SMoRRES Training

Thanks !