

Critical Issues in Augmentative Communication: Conversations about Improving Service Delivery

Part I: Identifying Barriers & Building AT Teams

Cathy Binger, Ph.D., CCC-SLP

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Broad Overview

Day 1

- Achieving positive outcomes in AAC
- AT/AAC team building challenges and solutions
- AAC assessment challenges and solutions

Day 2

- AAC assessment, con't
- AAC intervention challenges and solutions
- Creating tangible, meaningful, evidence-based outcomes

Goals for this Workshop

- My goals
 - For each one of you to take home
 - At least 3 ideas for how to improve AT/AAC services in your workplace
 - Have a plan for how to start implementing these ideas
- Your goals?
 - Let's write them down...
- We'll build in some time to discuss how to address your specific goals

Goals, con't

- Ultimate goal is the same in every case
 - ***Maximize communication functioning for every client***
 - Meet immediate communication needs
 - Plan for long-term communicative success

Getting Started with AT/AAC

Advice from Joan Green

– Author of *The Ultimate Guide to Assistive Technology in Special Education*

- Start gradually
- Start to network with others by joining online discussion groups
- When looking at technologies
 - Explore product websites to learn about product specs, features, and prices
 - Take advantage of free trials (from WATR and vendors)
 - Use all the free resources you can
- Be creative. Try new things. There are many paths to success!

Throughout this Workshop

- Keep asking:
 - What is the current status of AT/AAC in your workplace?
 - What are the current barriers to success?
 - What changes are reasonable?
 - Identify areas for immediate change
 - Easier short-term fixes
 - Identify areas for long-term change
 - Longer-term goals
- Before and After Videos...

How do we achieve positive outcomes like these?

- We know quite a bit about which ingredients are necessary to make a great sauce
- Information comes from various sources
 - Survey research
 - Qualitative research involving
 - individuals who use AAC
 - their families
 - their educators

References:

Calculator, 2009; Calculator & Black, 2010; Cress, 2004; Cushing et al; 2005; Johnston, Inglebret, Jones, & Ray (2006); Johnson, Reichle, & Evans, 2004; Lund & Light, 2007; Soto et al., 2001

Three major categories...

- ***Service delivery***
 - *System-wide*
 - *Service providers*
 - *Technology*
- Social supports
- Personal characteristics
- We'll focus mainly on service delivery, and a bit on social supports
 - Tied together in many ways

Positive Outcomes: The Role of System-Wide Supports

- Having state-wide , district-wide, and on-site supports makes all of this much easier

Positive Outcomes: The Role of Service Providers

- Realistic expectations for clients
 - Not too high
 - Biggest problem is with beginning communicators
 - Not too low!
 - Must challenge our clients who need AAC

Positive Outcomes: The Role of Service Providers

- Ongoing AAC instruction
 - Appropriate, ongoing AAC intervention
 - Must be **MOTIVATING** for the client
 - Must be **MEANINGFUL** for the client

Positive Outcomes: The Role of Service Providers

- For beginning communicators
 - Rate and frequency of support
 - Immediacy of reinforcement
 - Quality of reinforcement

Positive Outcomes: The Role of Service Providers

- Involve the client and family throughout process (overlaps with social supports)
 - **Must** have ‘buy-in’ from client and family
 - They must perceive the benefits
 - Cost-benefit analysis
 - AAC involves time, effort, & commitment from many people
 - Only works if everyone values it
 - It’s only valued if it makes a meaningful difference

Positive Outcomes: The Role of Technology

- AAC device must be matched to the client
 - NOT the client to the AAC device!
 - We are seeing this now more than ever...
- Overall ease of use
- System updated as needed
- Response effort required

Positive Outcomes: The Role of Social Supports

- AAC devices must be valued by
 - Person using device
 - Communication partners

Positive Outcomes: The Role of Social Supports

- Family involvement is stressed over and over again
 - Collaborative, family-centered decision-making
(Cushing et al; 2005; Soto et al, 2001)
 - Respecting parents' values, expectations, beliefs, priorities, and goals (Calculator, 2009; Cress, 2004)
 - Importance of integrating AAC training into family routines (Calculator & Black, 2010; Cress, 2004)

Positive Outcomes: The Role of Social Supports

- Social acceptance of device use
 - Within the client's world (school, home, etc.)
 - One argument for using iPad/iTouch apps...
 - (But remember that they have to be effective communication solutions, too!)

Positive Outcomes: The Role of Personal Characteristics

- Patience
- Persistence
- Social nature
- *High expectations*

Barriers to Success

- Write down the top 3 barriers to achieving AT/AAC success in your workplace
- Looking at the next slide, in which categories do they fit?

Barriers to Success

(Hopefully Surmountable)

- Services
 - System-wide issues
 - Service providers
 - Technology
- Social limitations
- Cultural differences

Barriers to Success: System-Wide Issues

- Many types of system-wide supports can help the process
 - Supports and infrastructure designed to build AT capacity



Barriers to Success: System-Wide Issues

- Policy and practice barriers
 - Limited/ No state-wide support for AT
 - Funding isn't what it used to be
 - No system-wide AT Team in place
 - Funding at, for ex, the district level may not be in place
 - SLPs and other AT team members need time to devote to building and maintaining AT teams

Barriers to Success: System-Wide Issues

- Policy and practice barriers
 - Service provision model may not best meet needs of an individual child
 - For ex, consultation model used for all kids, regardless of their needs

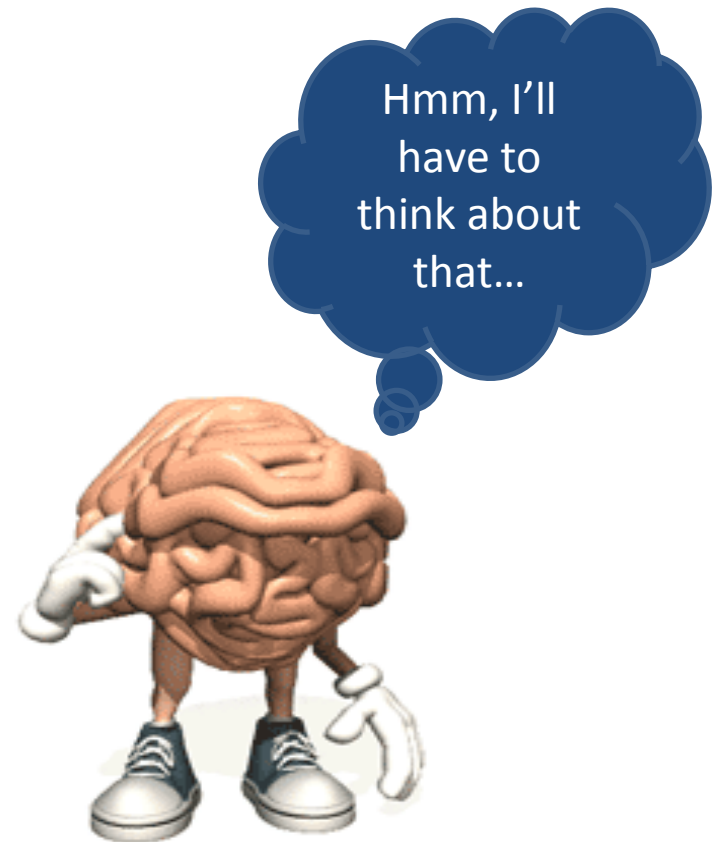
» (What happened to IEPs?)



- AAC kids frequently best served via combination of intensive 1-on-1 help plus (intensive) classroom consults

Barriers to Success: System-Wide Issues

- Policy and practice barriers, con't
 - May not be permitted to take device home
 - After all, how could being able to communicate at home help the child reach academic goals?



Barriers to Success: Service Provider Issues

- Attitude barriers
- Knowledge and skill barriers
- Time and caseload barriers

Barriers to Success: Service Provider Issues

- Attitude barriers
 - “I don’t do AAC”

Barriers to Success: Service Provider Issues

- Knowledge and skill barriers
 - Lack of local AAC expertise
 - Presence and Effectiveness of a Local AT team
 - What are your experiences with this?
 - We will be devoting lots of time to this...
 - Assessment
 - Goal-setting and intervention

Barriers to Success: Service Provider Issues

- Time and caseload barriers
 - Limited time to see clients/students
 - Limited time to instruct communication partners
 - AAC caseloads may not be ‘weighted’
 - District by district decision
 - What is this like in your districts?
 - → We’ll discuss possible solutions a bit later...

Barriers to Success: Technology Issues

- Obtaining devices
- Funding devices
- Servicing devices
- Updating devices

Barriers to Success: Social Issues

- Social supports
 - Lack of family support
 - Attitude/knowledge/skill barriers

Barriers to Success: Cultural Differences

- Devices may not be available in L1
- Devices do not easily switch between language
- Tension surrounding the language in which to purchase and program AAC device

Remember:

- *You must be the change you want to see in the world.*

– Mahatma Gandhi



So now that we are feeling so inspired...

- Let's tackle one of the big ones:
 - SYSTEM-WIDE ISSUES
- One MAJOR way to make headway with this sometimes overwhelming issue is to
 - BUILD EFFECTIVE AT/AAC TEAMS
- AT teams may be formed
 - At the school district level
 - At the local worksite level
 - In the schools, BOTH are important
 - Others?

Improving Service Delivery: AT/AAC Team Building

- Service delivery is made up of:
 - System-wide contributions
 - Service providers
 - Technology
- Building effective AT/AAC Teams mainly focuses on improving system-wide contributions to success

From WATI's "Assessing Students' Needs for AT" manual

Chapter 1 – Assistive Technology Assessment



Assistive Technology Roles and Responsibilities

Although school districts have been required since 1990 to specifically provide assistive technology devices and services, we continue to find a range of situations across school districts from:

- No one responsible for AT.
- One person responsible for AT struggling to find time because he or she has little or no reduction in other responsibilities.
- One person responsible for AT with some reduction in other responsibilities.
- A small team (often an SLP, an OT, and a teacher) at the district level responsible for AT with some reduction in other responsibilities.
- A larger, more complete team (usually adds vision and hearing as well as PT and sometimes different types of special education teachers) at district level with some building representation established.
- Well trained AT teams in each building with back up from a district level AT Resource team.

Looking at that list as a continuum, it is easy to understand that educators would struggle to comply with the law in those situations described first. It is nearly impossible to be in compliance in school districts where little or no effort has been made to assign responsibility, honor that responsibility by providing time to carry out duties, and provide training to all who require it.

WATI's "Assessing Students' Needs for AT" manual

- General WATI link
 - www.wati.org
- Link for the manual
 - <http://www.wati.org/content/supports/free/pdf/ASNAT5thEditionJun09.pdf>

Building Effective AT/AAC Teams



- Building AT/AAC teams at the district and on-site levels requires LEADERSHIP
- Most district-level AT teams have come about because a few good educators decided to make a difference
 - A bottom-up approach

Building Effective AT/AAC Teams

- Waiting for others to take reigns gets us precisely where you might expect...



Building Effective AT/AAC Teams: Building Capacity

- **“Resources for Building AT/AAC Capacity”**

- I put this together with Barb Locke from WATR



Microsoft Office
Word Document

- Let's spend some time discussing it

- Then we'll discuss some initial steps you can take to start building an AT Team in your workplace

Building Effective AT/AAC Teams: Getting Started

- Build your AT & AAC skills, con't
 - Use the resources on the “Resources for Building AT/AAC Capacity” handout
 - Sign up for AT/AAC listservs
 - ASHA’s Special Interest Group 12
 - QIAT: Quality Indicators for AT
 - Use online resources
 - Links on NATE may be a particularly good place to start (let’s look...):
 - » <http://www.natenetwork.org/resources>

Building Effective AT/AAC Teams: Getting Started

- Build your AT & AAC skills, con't
 - AT certification programs
 - Have each member of your AT team decide which certification to start with
 - Plan which workshops to attend and/or online courses to take
 - Use presentation on building AT teams from the Georgia Project for Assistive Tech
 - <http://www.gpat.org/index.aspx?PageReq=LocalCapacity>
 - Use this to prep for meeting with administrators!

Building Effective AT/AAC Teams: District Level

- What barriers did you come up with originally that fit into this category?
 - My bet: Multiple issues related to TIME
 - Caseloads
 - Meeting times
 - Travel
 - (We'll save service provider knowledge and skill issues for the on-site level...)

Building Effective AT/AAC Teams: District Level

- What solutions have you come up with to deal with these issues?
- How well have they worked?

Building Effective AT/AAC Teams: District Level

Meeting with Administrators

- Prepare carefully for discussions
- Before calling a meeting, it probably will be helpful to
 - Pull together a group of colleagues interested in building AT capacity
 - Build your arguments re: why an AT team is needed
 - Suggest a do-able plan
 - Short-term
 - Long-term

Building Effective AT/AAC Teams: District Level

- Pull together colleagues who
 1. See the need for an AT Team
 2. Are motivated to create positive change
 3. Have AT/AAC experience, if possible
 4. Most importantly, are willing to learn new things and are committed to engaging in this process

Building Effective AT/AAC Teams: District Level

- Build your arguments
 - What makes your administrators sit up and take notice?
 - What will they get out of it?

Building Effective AT/AAC Teams: District Level

- Build your arguments
 - Student performance
 - Keep it as positive as possible
 - Ways in which AT has helped students at your school
 - Students who might make dramatic changes with proper implementation of AT
 - Tie in with mandatory standardized testing?

Building Effective AT/AAC Teams: District Level

- Build your arguments, con't
 - IDEA requirements
 - “Consideration” of AT is the law for all kids with IEPs
 - Many states/districts have had a “Consideration Process” in place for many years
 - Consideration of AT needs to be more than just a box that’s checked
 - Failing to carefully consider AT for kids on IEPs = expensive lawsuits waiting to happen
 - AT can truly help children stay within their least restrictive environments

Building Effective AT/AAC Teams: District Level

- Build your arguments, con't
 - Demonstrate what other states/districts are already doing (and have been for many years, in some cases)
 - Paperwork from other states can be easily modified
 - AT teams help streamline the IEP process
 - Etc.
 - Discuss resources that are already available
 - WATR
 - Local resources (?)

Building Effective AT/AAC Teams: District Level

- Suggest a do-able plan
 - Short- and long-term plans
 - Who is willing be on the team
 - What kind of time is needed to get started
 - How to (re)define caseloads to make it work
 - Possibilities for “tele-medicine” approach
 - Funding requested to build AT team capacity
 - Attending workshops/conferences
 - Take online classes
 - Enroll in certification programs

Building Effective AT/AAC Teams: District Level

- So...what does everyone think?
 - Any ideas you can take home and try?
 - Anything seem do-able?
 - No question:
 - Caseload issues are challenging
 - Rural travel creates its own challenges
- But take heart...
 - Many districts throughout the U.S. have very effective AT teams, even in poor districts!
 - Successful AT teams are more about PEOPLE than money



Building Effective AT/AAC Teams: On-site

- Even if your district has a fabulous AT team, each student will have his or her own on-site AT/AAC team
 - (Even if no one knows it!)
- Made up of
 - The student
 - The student's family
 - The student's on-site school personnel
 - SLP, classroom teachers, EAs, OT, PT, etc.
 - District-wide AT personnel

Building Effective AT/AAC Teams: On-site

- What barriers did we come up with originally that fit into this category?
 - My bets:
 - Personnel knowledge and skill barriers
 - And the ever-present TIME issues

Building Effective AT/AAC Teams: On-site

- What solutions have you come up with to deal with these issues?
- How well have they worked?

Building Effective AT/AAC Teams: On-site

- My two cents
 - Be as creative as you can be with time
 - Check in with teachers before classes start, lunch time, etc.
 - Funneling students to great classrooms
 - Make a list of all of your non-face-time with students
 - How effectively are you spending all of this time?
 - Yes, paperwork is the bane of your existence
 - But ...what about meeting times? Is everyone making the most of all meeting times?...

Building Effective AT/AAC Teams: On-site

- Meeting times (Non-IEP meetings)
 - Are the goals of the meetings clear to everyone?
 - Are they focused?
 - Are they highly productive?
 - Do they result in improved student outcomes?
 - If not, why the heck are you meeting?
 - Can you help to make them more efficient?
 - Are there already scheduled meeting times that YOU can take over
 - Conduct low-key in-services
- Our time is precious.
 - Are we making the most of it?
 - If not, how can we change it?

Building Effective AT/AAC Teams: On-site

- The Unified Plan of Support (UPS) (Hunt et al., 2002; 2003; 2004)
 - One method used to create successful outcomes for individual children using AAC
 - “Designed to unify and integrate educational, communication, and social supports for students with AAC needs in regular classroom.”
 - Also can be used in preschools and special ed classrooms

Building Effective AT/AAC Teams: On-site

- UPS
 1. Regularly scheduled team meetings
 2. Development of supports to increase focus students' academic and social participation in school activities
 3. Built-in accountability system
 4. Flexibility to change ineffectual supports

Building Effective AT/AAC Teams: On-site

- UPS includes
 1. Curricular supports: reading, writing, math
 2. Communication supports: improve participation
 3. Social supports: improve peer interactions

Building Effective AT/AAC Teams: On-site

- UPS collaboration
 - Need a team leader
 - But a highly collaborative process
 - If everyone is invested, everyone will work to meet the goals
 - This ABSOLUTELY includes EAs!
 - They should **not** be watching the students while these meetings take place

Building Effective AT/AAC Teams: On-site

- UPS paperwork
 - Here is what the plan looks like
 - “UPS –fill-in”

Building Effective AT/AAC Teams: On-site

- UPS: First meeting
 - Review academic development
 - Reading, writing, math
 - Describe extent and quality of classroom participation
 - Group discussions?
 - Extent of independence from EA?
 - Large group instruction?
 - Small-group instruction?
 - Seeks needed assistance?

Building Effective AT/AAC Teams: On-site

- UPS: First meeting
 - Describe extent and quality of peer interactions
 - Initiating interactions?
 - Responding to interactions?
 - Participating in conversations?
 - Providing assistance?
 - Receiving assistance?
 - Working collaboratively?

Building Effective AT/AAC Teams: On-site

- UPS: First meeting
 - Brainstorm items for UPS
 - Consensus approach
 - Determine which team members are responsible for providing supports for each item

Building Effective AT/AAC Teams: On-site

- UPS: Monthly meetings and ratings
 - ***This is critical***
 - Keeps everyone focused
 - Keeps everyone aware of items that need more attention
 - Can change and delete items as needed
 - Rewarding to see progress!

Building Effective AT/AAC Teams: On-site

- UPS: Research Findings
 - Very nice results for children using AAC
 - Higher levels of peer interactions
 - Higher levels of engagement
 - Increased initiations with teachers
 - Increased use of AAC devices
 - **Decreased** assistance from EAs
 - This is a **good** thing!

Building Effective AT/AAC Teams: On-site

- Questions about UPS?
- Questions about building effective AT teams?
 - District level?
 - On-site?

Now that you have a plan to build AT teams... Let's look at service provider issues.

- Service delivery :
 - System-wide contributions (DONE)
 - Service providers
 - Attitude barriers
 - Time and caseload barriers
 - Knowledge and skill barriers
 - Lack of local AAC expertise
 - » Presence and Effectiveness of a Local AT team (discussed)
 - » Assessment
 - » Goal-setting and intervention
 - Technology

Service Provider Issues: Attitude Barriers

REVIEW:

- Attitude barriers
 - “I don’t do AAC”



Service Provider Issues: Attitude Barriers

- Let the results speak for themselves...



Service Provider Issues: Attitude Barriers

- When you can't avoid the turkeys...
 - Only ask others to do things that you **KNOW** will be successful
 - Try them out yourself first
 - Make every success a surprise
 - “I had no idea this would work...but see what Jenny can do when I do X?”
 - “Gosh, I wonder if she would do X if you tried it with her, too...”



Service Provider Issues: Solving Time and Caseload Barriers

- “Solving” might not be the right term..
- Limited time to see clients/students
- Limited time to instruct communication partners
- AAC caseloads may not be ‘weighted’



- ➡ Advocating for change
- ➡ Picking your battles
- ➡ Any further ideas?

Improving Service Delivery: Service Provider Issues

- ☑ Attitude barriers
- ☑ Time and caseload barriers
- Knowledge and skill barriers
 - Lack of local AAC expertise
 - ☑ Presence and Effectiveness of a Local AT team
 - ➡ Assessment: → up next!
 - Goal-setting and intervention