Critical Issues in Augmentative Communication: Conversations about Improving Service Delivery

Part II:
AAC Assessment and Technology Challenges and Solutions

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Improving AAC Assessments

• How are AAC assessments currently conducted in your workplace?
• What do you like about the current system?
  – What’s working?
• What kinds of changes might help?
Improving AAC Assessments

• We MUST build the capacity for local educational teams to perform this service
  – Outcomes:
    • Assessments completed in a more timely manner
      – WATR is chronically behind because of me!!!
    • Much more meaningful results
      – For clients/students
      – For families
      – For educators
    • Less device abandonment
    • Move more easily into intervention
  •
Improving AAC Assessments

• The Assessment Process
  – We don’t have enough time to cover this thoroughly
    • Not trying to teach you how to conduct all elements of an AAC assessment in this workshop
  – What I want you to leave with:
    • AAC assessment process steps
      – Why each step is important
    • Practical assessment forms
      – Forms that WATR will begin using soon
      – Will help you plan assessments
    • Knowledge of how WATR currently can and cannot help
AAC Assessment Process Steps
(Binger, Ball, Dietz, Kent-Walsh, Lasker, Lund, McKelvey, & Quach, in prep)

• *Step 0: Consideration Process*
  – Used only in schools
• Step 1: Referral
• Step 2: Case history
• Step 3: Diagnostic questions
• Step 4: Evaluation procedures
• Step 5: Identify and recommend AAC interventions
• Step 6: Secure funding
• Step 7: Repeat 2-6 as needed

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Step 0: The Consideration Process

• Where have you heard this before?

  – “Does the student need assistive technology devices and/or services?”
The Consideration Process

• “Does the student need assistive technology devices and/or services?”
  – If the student uses or needs any type of AT, this box on the IEP should be checked “yes”
  – Schools need to “consider” the use of AT with ALL children who have IEPs
    • Many states have a formal “consideration process” that is used for all children with IEPs
    • Paperwork is included with every IEP
The Consideration Process

• Often, this is a state-wide mandate
  – (To my knowledge, this is not mandated by the Wyoming Dept of Ed)

  – But it should be...
    • Better for kids
    • Avoids lawsuits (selling point for administrators!)
    • Other reasons listed in a good PPT presentation from GPAT: “Building Local Capacity through Assistive Technology Teams”
The Consideration Process

• St. Paul (MN) Public Schools Process
  – Easy-to-follow website
  – Easy-to-use forms
  – Use same SETT form that WATR uses for our AAC consults
  – “Every student's need for AT is considered by the IEP team” in this district.
    • This is how it *should* be done.

• LOTS of info & forms available on other sites, too
The Consideration Process

• Consideration Process Steps
  – Step 1: Use the SETT framework to consider
    • Student
    • Environment
    • Tasks
    • Tools
  – Step 2: Ask Key Questions
  – Step 3: Use the AT Consideration Guide to examine AT options
  – Step 4: Refer for a full assessment if needed
    • If AAC is needed, this is necessary
    • (Which will lead us next into Step 1: Referral)
• [http://specialed.spps.org/AT_in_IEP.html](http://specialed.spps.org/AT_in_IEP.html)
HUGE amount of info under the “Supports” tab
- Detailed info on providing AT in all areas
- Classroom activities
- This is a guide for using the SETT framework for AAC
The Consideration Process

• Other resources:
  – University of Maryland
    • List of consideration resources
    • [http://www.teachingat.info/resources/ATconsideration.html](http://www.teachingat.info/resources/ATconsideration.html)
  – University of Kentucky Assistive Tech (UKAT) Toolkit
    • in resources handout
  – Wisconsin Assistive Tech Initiative (WATI)
    • Very thorough!
    • [www.wati.org](http://www.wati.org)
  – Georgia Project for Assistive Tech (GPAT)
    • Updated recently
    • [www.gpat.org](http://www.gpat.org)
The Consideration Process: WATR’s Role (Binger’s perspective only!)

• Currently, if you request that WATR come to your workplace to provide a consultation
  – End result = a completed SETT form (see next slide)

• In AAC cases, it means we have worked with you to complete **Step 0**

• It does NOT mean that we have completed a thorough AAC assessment!

• WATR does not have the people-power to do this

• It ultimately is in the best interest of districts to conduct their own assessments

• Must build capacity to do this

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Example of a Completed DATE & SETT forms from WATR

• DATE:
  – “DATE BLANK from WATR”

• SETT:
  – “SETT BLANK from WATR”
Once you’ve considered the use of AT – and more specifically, AAC – it’s time to plan a full AAC assessment

- The SETT process helps you conduct a very pointed assessment
AAC Assessment Process Steps

(Binger, Ball, Dietz, Kent-Walsh, Lasker, Lund, McKelvey, & Quach, in prep)

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Step 1: Referral

• “AAC Finders”
  – Identify individuals who might benefit from AAC
  – Make referrals to personnel with AAC assessment expertise

• As a field, we need to build capacity here

• Many people who could benefit from AAC are not being referred

• Education efforts required to improve this

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Step 1: Referral

• AAC Team Instructions for the UNM Speech and Hearing Clinic (Sandy Nettleton, director)
  – “UNM AAC Ax Team Instructions”
AAC Assessment Process Steps (Binger et al., in prep)

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Step 2: Case History (Binger et al., in prep)

- Critical for planning an AAC assessment
- Many AAC case history forms available online
  - Many websites listed on your Resources handout have links to these
  - Can google “AAC case history form”
  - I’ve provided you with the one we use at UNM
    - At UNM, we will not conduct AAC assessments without a completed intake form
    - Let’s have a look...
      - “UNM AAC Ax INTAKE”

- We are in the process of developing one for WATR
  - Likely will start having you fill these out if you ask us to complete an AAC consultation
AAC Assessment Process Steps  
(Binger et al., in prep)

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Step 3: Diagnostic Questions  (Binger et al., in prep)

• Determine the goals of AAC assessment
  – MANY of the questions are similar (or identical) to those you’d ask in any SLP evaluation
    • What communication needs does this person have?
    • What communication modes is the person using?
    • When are these modes being used effectively?
    • What communication needs are NOT being met with the current modes?
    • What AAC options can help the client meet these needs?
    • What are the BEST AAC options?
      – More on this in a minute...
Step 3: Diagnostic Questions (Binger et al., in prep)

• If you used the Consideration Process, some of these questions will be answered already
AAC Assessment Process Steps (Binger et al., in prep)

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Step 4: Evaluation Procedures  (Binger et al., in prep)

- **Goal: Improve participation**
  - With all important communication partners
  - In all important settings
Step 4: Evaluation Procedures

• An area where we need to build capacity in Wyoming

• This is the nitty-gritty part of the assessment that requires expertise
  – But...you know more than you think you know!
  – Be brave:
    • Use AAC Ax forms to help guide you
    • Use your SLP knowledge to guide you
      – You are evaluating the use of tools to assist with communication
      – AAC is merely a tool to reach the same goals as all of your other clients
Step 4: Evaluation Procedures

• Based on information provided/observed
  – Develop initial evaluation procedures
    • Determine AAC options to explore
    • Devise testing procedures
    • Prepare administration guidelines

  – Explore potential to benefit from a range of AAC options
Step 4: Evaluation Procedures

• What are the BEST AAC options?
  – If you have completed the SETT, you’ll have a list of devices to try (assuming a device is appropriate...more on that in a minute...)

• Need to TRIAL devices

• Free trials available
  – From WATR
  – From vendors
    • WATR may be able to facilitate this
Step 4: Evaluation Procedures

• Be brave
  – Try it!
  – You know more than you think you know
  – SLP

• WATR’s role
  – Borrow devices
  – Use the list from SETT of devices to trial
    • Systematic trials

• NOT just about the devices
Step 4: Evaluation Procedures

- Sample forms
  - Use forms that fit your work site

  - UNM Speech and Hearing Clinic Funding Report
    - Privately funded
    - NOT just for schools
    - VERY thorough!
    - “UNM AAC Ax Funding Report”

- Beukelman & Mirenda’s Participation Inventory
  - Description: next few slides
  - “Participation Inventory”
Participation Inventory

• Conduct an Participation Inventory (a.k.a. “Needs Assessment”)
• Assess the participation patterns of peers
• Assess participation effectiveness of individual who uses AAC
• Identify participation barriers
Participation Inventory

• Goals
  – determine current methods of communication and their relative success
  – environments where AAC is needed
  – interaction partners within environments
  – expectations - user’s, family, professionals
Participation Inventory

• Participation Inventory Form

  – List all specific daily activities in which individual must participate at home, school, work, etc.

  – List level of independence w/ each activity

  – What will this tell you once it’s complete? How will this guide the Ax & Tx?
## Participation Inventory

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Critical steps to meeting the activity goal</th>
<th>Level of independence (P)eer-(T)arget</th>
<th>Opportunity barriers</th>
<th>Person barriers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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</tbody>
</table>


Figure 6.2. Participation inventory. (From Blacksten-Adler, 2003.)
Participation Inventory

• Assess participation patterns of peers
  – Importance of this step will vary
    • When is this step important?
  – Possible participation patterns:
    • independent
    • independent with setup
    • requires verbal assistance
    • requires physical assistance
    • does not participate
Participation Inventory

• Assess Participation Effectiveness
  – If using peer data, can compare potential AAC user’s performance with peer performance
    – Where can individual participate at a level similar to peers?
    – Where is there a participation gap?
More Sample Forms

– “UNM AAC Ax Checklist”
  • To help keep track of all of the steps

– AAC Tech Connect forms
  • [www.aactechconnect.com](http://www.aactechconnect.com)
    • Private company
    • Providing an AAC Ax workshop for WATR in September
    • WATR likely will start using some of their forms
AAC TechConnect Forms

- AAC Tech Connect
  - Doing an AAC Ax workshop for WATR in September!
  - WATR likely will start using some of her forms

- Skills and Features to Consider for AT
  - Great place to start
  - Easy way to make sure you’ve considered many important features
    - “AACTechConnect Person Skills and Features”

- Summary of Language Usage, Organization, and Representation
  - Nitty gritty of device evaluation
    - “AACTechConnect Summary of Language Use”

- AAC device Decision-Making
  - Good form to track device trials
  - Needed for some funding reports
    - “AACTechConnect Device Decisions”
Step 4: Evaluation Procedures

Common pitfalls

• Overestimating Abilities
• Underestimating Abilities

How to Avoid

• Receptive language measures (I know, I know...hard with autism...)
  – PPVT
  – TACL-3
  – ROWVT
Step 4: Evaluation Procedures
Underestimating Abilities

• Receptive language
  – Lets take a look at a child with developmental disorder

  – Dx: VCFS (DiGeorge Syndrome)
    • VPI
      • Severe childhood apraxia of speech (common with VCFS)
  – Age: 3;0
  – Communication:
    • ~50 signs
    • ~ 0% intelligible
    • Nasal vowels, not much more
  – Watch the video, and think about what kinds of language goals you’d set for him initially

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Step 4: Evaluation Procedures

• If you were working with this child, and had the info I’ve presented, what kind of expectations would you have for him?
  – Language goals?
  – What kinds of things would you expect him to be able to do using AAC within the next, say, 3-6 months?
Step 4: Evaluation Procedures

• Now: What if you evaluated his receptive language scores:
  – TACL-3 and PPVT = 50th percentile (3;0 years)

• What kinds of things would you expect him to be able to do using AAC within the next, say, 3-6 months?

• Here is what he was doing within a few weeks of Ix (~ 2-3 hours of Ix)
Step 4: Evaluation Procedures

• A slightly trickier case...

• Oscar
  – Age = 6;6
  – Integrated K classroom
  – DD (no other dx)
  – I’ll even tell you what his receptive language scores are
    • ~3;6 level on PPVT and TACL-3
    • ~3-4 year old level on other cognitive measures, too
      ➡ Significant delay!

• Watch the video and ask yourself:
  – What kinds of things would you expect him to be able to do using AAC within the next, say, 3-6 months?
Step 4: Evaluation Procedures

• If you were working with this child, and had the info I’ve presented, what kind of expectations would you have for him?
  – Language goals?
  – What kinds of things would you expect him to be able to do using AAC within the next, say, 3-6 months?
Step 4: Evaluation Procedures

• Receptive language scores, when they are reliable, are a crucial part of the AAC Ax process

  – They help you set appropriate expectations
    • Aim: Receptive and expressive skills at roughly the same age level
      – Beware of receptive-expressive gaps!
      – The good news: This equals FAST progress for most folks when provided with appropriate AAC solutions!

• Note: This does NOT mean that expressive skills are as advanced as receptive!
  – My receptive and expressive language skills are both WNL for a 42 year old (memory skills are another issue 😊)
  – AND, my receptive language skills still far exceed my expressive abilities, and always will
Step 4: Evaluation Procedures

Overestimating Abilities

The opposite happens too...

- “Jay,” age 3;4
- Referred to WATR for an AAC consult; looking for technologies
- Cortical visual impairment
- Cerebral palsy
- Grasps objects, esp if shiny
- Laughs & smiles when happy; cries when upset
- Bailey Scales:
  - Self care=7 mo., Se
  - Attention & Memory=14mo.
  - Receptive language=12 mo.
  - Expressive Language=14 mo.
  - (Do these results make sense???)
Step 4: Evaluation Procedures
Overestimating Abilities

• Questions to ask when considering AAC
  – Is the child symbolic? Does he use any of the following, consistently, to communicate?
    • Speech?
    • Signs?
    • Meaningful gestures?
    • Photos?
  – Does the child orient communication toward a partner?
    • Gaze
    • Touch
    • Reach
  – Does the child exhibit joint attention?
    • Looks back and forth between something of interest and a person
Step 4: Evaluation Procedures
Overestimating Abilities

• If the answer to all of these questions is “No” or “I’m not sure” →
  – Complete a Communication Matrix
  – HIGHLY UNLIKELY that the child is going to benefit right now from technology options
  – NOT a candidate for PECS yet!
  – Many pre-requisite skills we can and should work on

• Even if the answer is “Yes,” it’s still a good idea to complete the Communication Matrix
  – Evaluates skills up to the point where the child is combining words
Step 4: Evaluation Procedures
Beginning Communicators

• After watching Jay’s video, reading his profile, and examining his Communication Matrix, here is what I put in his report.
  • SETT contained NO recommendations for AT at this time

• And here is the info packet on the 7 Levels of Communication and the Communication Matrix
  • “Rowland Schweigert Levels of Commu”
Step 4: Evaluation Procedures
Beginning Communicators

• There is SO MUCH we can do with these ‘beginning communicators’

• To guide the way, use
  – What you know about development
  – What you learn from the Communication Matrix
  – Every Move Counts program
    • “A sensory based approach to communication and assistive technology for individuals with significant sensory motor differences, developmental differences and autism.”
    • Video: http://www.everymovecounts.net/theprogram.html
Step 4: Evaluation Procedures
Wrap-Up

• You now have
  – Evaluation forms to help you get started

• You also know how to look out for common pitfalls
  – Underestimating abilities
  – Overestimating abilities

• We have NOT covered
  – How to conduct the feature-matching part of an Ax
  – WATR workshop next month will focus on this...
AAC Assessment Process Steps (Binger et al., in prep)

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  - Info on the Resources document
- Step 7: Repeat 2-6 as needed
Step 5: Identify and Recommend AAC Interventions

- As with any good assessment, the assessment process should lead you right into intervention recommendations

- Keep the L in SLP
- Keep the C in AAC

ccione de los ejemplos...
Step 5: Identify and Recommend AAC Interventions

Goals for Timmy & Oscar: Generative Language Users

- If they had intelligible speech, what would you expect from them right now?
Step 5: Identify and Recommend AAC Interventions

Goals for Timmy: Generative Language Users

• Timmy will produce at least 10 3-word sentences using proper word order during a 15 minute story-reading activity

  ➡️ Focus on syntax and semantics!
  – Use of a variety of semantic-syntactic categories
    • Agent-action-object
    • Action-descriptor-object, etc.
  – Use of various parts of speech
    • Nouns, pronouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs
Goals for Oscar: Emerging Generative Language User

- Oscar will spontaneously produce at least three 2-word messages using speech and/or his AAC device during three different classroom activities
  - Goals and objectives should still be about communication
  - They should not primarily be about using technologies
    - Again: Technology is just a TOOL
      - Using the technology is NEVER the goal
      - What matters is what the person can accomplish with the technology
Step 5: Identify and Recommend AAC Interventions

Goals for Jay: Level 1-2 Communicator

• Consistently protest

• Consistently request continuation of an action
  – Actions might include
    • Being tickled,
    • Listening to more music
    • Using a vibrating toy
    • Other motivating activities that can be repeated or resumed
Step 5: Identify and Recommend AAC Interventions

Goals for Jay: Level 1-2 Communicator

• Consistently request attention
  – LOVES personal attention from Mom
  – Highly motivated by attention from other children

• Consistently request objects
  – Demonstrate that he wants ONE object before working on choices
    • Asking for objects that he likes to hold, touch, or (if appropriate) put in his mouth.
Step 5: Identify and Recommend AAC Interventions

• Let’s discuss YOUR client issues and possible interventions...

• And I have various videos, depending on your interests...
  – Child with autism – intervention as a process (we all get it wrong sometimes)
  – Others...
Returning to Our Original Barriers...  

• Service delivery  
  – System-wide  
  – Service providers  
  – Technology  
    • Anything here that has not come up yet that you want to discuss?  
    • See next slide...
• **Technology**
  – Obtaining devices
  – Funding devices
  – Servicing devices
  – Updating devices
Funding Devices

• WATR offers some support to assist with funding
  – WATR collaborates with
    • WILR (Wyoming Independent Living Rehabilitation) and
    • 1st Interstate Bank for the WY Technology Access Program (WYTAP)
    • WILR oversees the application process
    • Purchases $500 - $25,000 are considered
  – Waiver program
    • Waiting list
    • Getting harder to secure funding
  – iDevices: funding is up in the air at the moment

• Your experiences?
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