



# AAC & Autism:

## iPads, iPhones, & Tablets as AAC Devices

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# What Is AAC?

- **Augmentative & Alternative Communication (AAC)**
  - **ASHA describes AAC as an area of clinical practice that attempts to compensate (either temporarily or permanently) for the impairment and disability patterns of individuals with severe expressive communication disorders including speech-language and writing.**
  - **Should include individual's full communication abilities: existing speech & vocalizations, gestures, manual signs, communication boards, and speech output devices, etc...**

- Ronski, et al. (2000)

Georgia Tools for Life: <http://www.gatfl.org>

# What is AAC?

- Symbols
- Aids
- Techniques
- Strategies



- ASHA, (1991)



# AT and AAC



- **Assistive Technology (AT)**

- Any item or piece of equipment, whether acquired commercially, modified, or customized, that is used to increase, maintain, or improve functional capabilities of individuals with disabilities.

(Code of Federal Regulations [CFR], 34 CFR § 300.5)

- **To facilitate: mobility, play, environmental control, access, communication, participation, etc...**

Romski, et al. (2000)

# AT and AAC



Any service that directly assists a child with a disability in the selection, acquisition, or use of an assistive technology device....

(Code of Federal Regulations [CFR], 34 CFR 300.6)

- *Includes evaluation in customary environment, coordinating services such as those associated with existing education plans and programs, training and technical assistance for professionals*



# What Is AAC?

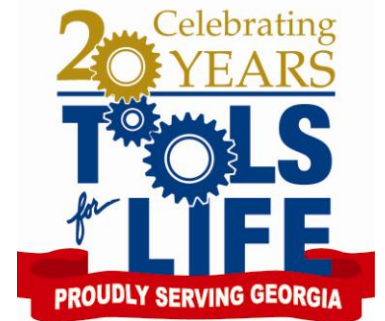
Historically, that has meant:

- Costly devices – often customized
- Outside payees: Insurance, Medicaid, Schools
- Formal evaluations
- Approvals required
- Slow Process

# Emerging Technology



- New Tools: Consumer Products as AT
  - iPhone/ Android Phones
  - iPod Touch
  - iPad
  - Tablets



# Emerging Technology

- iPad is becoming “go-to” AT product
  - Administrators:
    - less-expensive alternative to costly devices
  - Parents:
    - Greater awareness (consumer market product)
    - Greater willingness to try AAC
  - Students:
    - shift to high tech solutions
    - away from lower tech stand-bys



# How we communicate is changing



- 21<sup>st</sup> century communication is different
  - Talk more at a distance
  - Showing pictures ~ Telling with AAC?
  - Cell phone cameras, Facebook, text messaging
- We live in a language-based world
  - Language is changing
  - Leveling of the playing field?

# Emerging Technology



60 Minutes TV Show, Oct.23, 2011

- <http://www.cbsnews.com/video/watch/?id=7385686n>
- Or google: "60 Minutes Autism Augmentative Communication"

# Are These Tools Appropriate?



- Do features of new device meet individual's needs?
- Not what the device can do, but what person can do with the device...



# Are These Tools Appropriate?

- Individual choice
- Portability
- More than just AAC: Other apps
  - To do list, daily schedule
  - Calculator
  - Task lists (task analysis)



## Are These Tools Appropriate?

- Device by itself will not improve students expressive language
- Professionals are scrutinizing the iPad
  - Learning
  - Communication
- Parents are experiencing
  - Low barriers to entry
  - Limits become clear later



## Are These Tools Appropriate?

- Traditional AAC devices have greater functional capability than Apps on an iPad
  - Multiple language maps
  - Computer interface
- Students with critical communication needs still require language therapy using SGD
- Up to parents & support team to use discernment & judgment

# iPad, iPod and AAC



## Considerations:

- Apps
- Device Features
- Real Estate

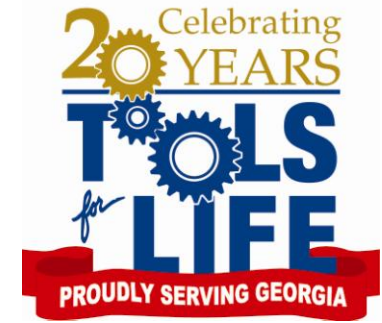
# Apps for AAC



Some examples:

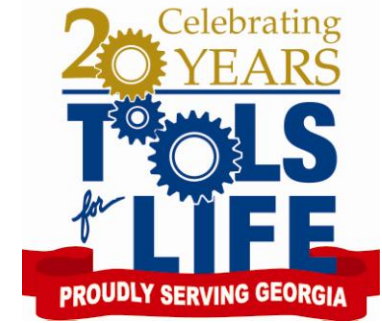
- ProloQuo2Go
- TouchChat
- SonoFlex
- Tap to Speak





# Lessons of Research

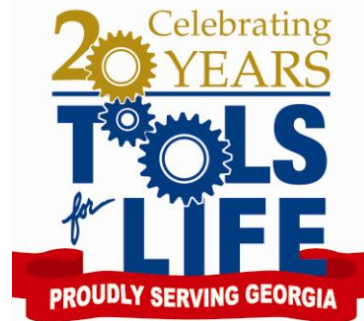
- Are there any prerequisites to using an SGD?
- Does SGD use make children dependent upon device? Will it delay their vocalizations? Will they become dependent?
- Will providing device alone lead to communication progress?



# Lessons of Research

## Language Acquisition through Motor Planning

- Auditory signals
- Consistent Motor Patterns
- Shared Focus
- Consequences
- Readiness to learn



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