

AT for Communication

Basic Tips & Strategies for Starting AAC with Students

November 2, 2023

AT Partnership Webinar Series

GA Dept of Education | Tools for Life

Jennifer Ro, MA CCC-SLP, AT-AAC Specialist

Georgia Tools for Life

Disclosures

Financial:

- Employee of Tools for Life – CIDI, at Georgia Tech
- AT-AAC Consultant, Independent

Non-Financial:

- ASHA – Special Interest Group 12 (AAC), Member
- USSAAC, Member
 - Committee – AAC Awareness, Member

Agenda

- What is AT and AAC? A Continuum
- Which students need AAC to support or develop their communication abilities?
- Getting Started – AAC Tools in the Classroom, Vocabulary, Abilities to Note
- Basic Strategies – AAC for Understanding & Expression
- Robust AAC? Things to Consider
- How to Get AT Support for K-12 - GADoE/TFL AT Partnership

What is Assistive Technology?



- An Assistive Technology Device is:

“Any item, piece of equipment or product system, whether acquired commercially off the shelf, modified, or customized, that is used to increase, maintain, or improve the functional capabilities of children with disabilities.”

- [GADoE – Assistive Technology and IDEA](#)

Assistive Technology Continuum

Assistive Technology is a ***continuum of tools, strategies, and services*** that match a person's needs, abilities, and tasks.

Low/No-tech

- pencil grip
- adapted books
- slant board
- highlighters, tape
- magnifiers
- color coding
- read to out loud
- picture schedule
- strategies for memory
- colored transparencies
- proofreaders
- note taker
- dry erase board

Mid-Tech

- word prediction
- text to speech
- speech to text
- spell checkers
- talking calculators
- digital recorders
- organizers
- e-books
- adapted keyboard
- adapted mouse
- adapted toys
- CCTV
- basic apps for tablets

High-Tech

- computer/laptops
- tablets/phablets
- smartphones
- smart pens
- OCR scanner/software
- magnification software
- speech output devices
- switch, joystick access
- scanning access
- voice recognition
- environmental control devices
- full featured apps

What is AAC?

American Speech/Language and Hearing Association (ASHA)

Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) includes all forms of communication (other than oral speech) that are used to express thoughts, needs, wants and ideas.

This includes both:

Unaided forms of AAC – do not require an external tool. For example, gestures, facial expressions, etc.

Aided forms of AAC – require some form of external tool – can be non-electronic or electronic. For example, communication boards, writing, speech generating devices, including apps on tablets.

Purpose of AAC

Augmentative & Alternative Communication

- An “augment” to verbal speech
methods of communication that add to or increase an individual’s current verbal speech ability
- An “alternative” to verbal speech
methods of communication that are an alternative to verbal speech when there is limited to no verbal speech ability

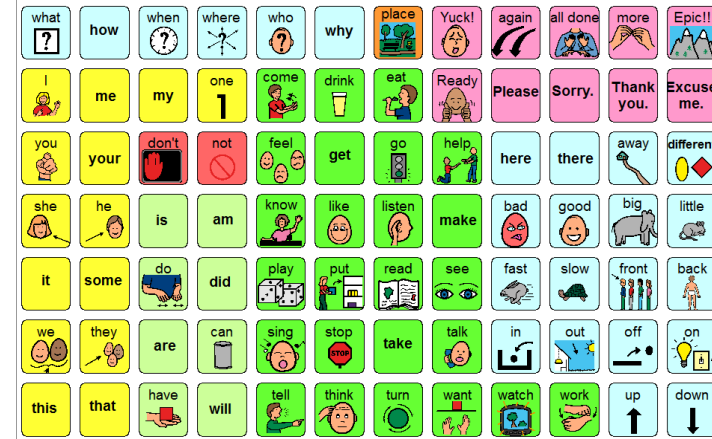
Goal- Effective Communication Method(s) That Matches Developmental Abilities and Can Grow

- All should have access to identified AAC supports and strategies unique to their individualized needs
 - Remember - Communication is 2-way
 - Use AAC to develop BOTH understanding and expression
 - Keep in mind - Long-term plan for growth!
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- There is a general roadmap
... developmental progression of language!



Getting Started – Classroom AAC Tools

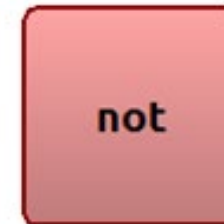
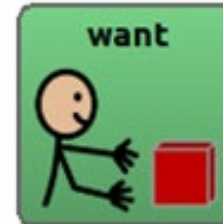
- What is available in your classroom to use right away?
- Low or Lite-Tech Supports
 - Single pictures, core word boards (project core, self-made boards, boards of AAC device vocab)
- Mid-tech with Voice Output
 - Single switch (or 2-switch) voice output devices (Big Mack, iTalk2)
 - Static display devices 9+ locations, 20+ locations, 32 locations (QuickTalkers, GoTalks)
- Dynamic display
 - Ipad with communication app
 - GoTalk Now, LAMP Words for Life, TouchChat, proloquo2go, TDSnap, etc



Getting Started – Choose the “Right” Vocabulary

Choose words and phrases that can be used readily throughout the day in various activities, situations, or conversations

- Core Vocabulary – 400 words account for 75% of words in conversation
- Classroom Core or Phrases – words/phrases frequently used in class
- Classmate and Teacher Names
- Others?



Observe and Take Note of Abilities

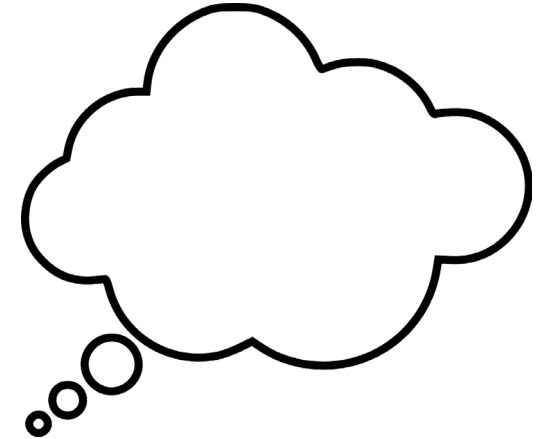
- Identify characteristics and note any challenges when using classroom AAC.
 - Do they understand that touching a picture “communicates” an idea or thought? Or can they only identify a picture when asked?
 - What is their level of engagement for a range of classroom activities?
 - What body part do they use? finger(s), whole hand, other movement, etc.
 - How small a location can they touch? Effort & accuracy?
 - Is there ability to locate a desired picture from a group? From a group of how many?
 - Can the student locate a desired picture on a different page or in another location?
 - Do they understand categories?
 - Is there a better response when voice output is added?
- For students with significant motor impairments, many other factors to consider

Using AAC – To Teach Understanding

- Focus both on:
 - Input - Student Observes AAC Being Used to Understand/Learn
 - Output- Student has OPPORTUNITIES to Use AAC to Express
- Overall Goal: SNUG – Spontaneous Novel Utterance Generation
- Strategy for Input/Understanding-
 - Aided Language Input – using AAC in an activity to emphasize what is being said to them or to the class
 - Modeling – showing the student what could be said as a “response or comment”



Using AAC – To Teach Expression

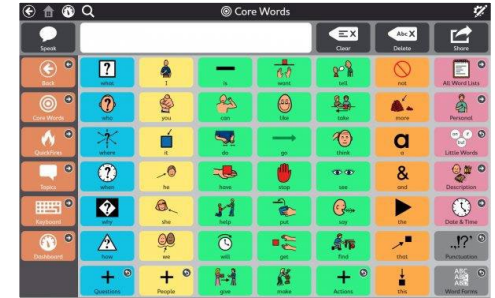


- Strategies for Output/Expression
 - AAC always available
 - Provide frequent opportunities for the student to initiate.
 - Provide WAIT time (count to 5)
 - If no response, model a developmentally appropriate response using AAC
- Rule of Thumb: Adult should touch the device 4 times to every 1 opportunity the student is given to use AAC to “say something”
- Encourage expression for a variety of purposes
 - Expressing wants/needs, directing others, commenting, describing thoughts/feelings

Robust AAC? Consider These Characteristics

Student shows motivation and interest in interacting with others

- Initiates some interactions independently
- Shows interest in a range of activities
- Uses at least 10-20 single words or pictures to communicate something they want to do to another person



An extra bonus, family is interested in AAC and ...

- Shows strong support for AAC
- Shows active participation in learning to use AAC with their child



Vocab Organization: Robust AAC Devices & Apps

Motor-Pattern Focused

- Prentke-Romich AAC Devices
 - Unity, LAMP Words for Life WFL
- iPad Apps
 - LAMP Words for Life-tfl, Speak for Yourself

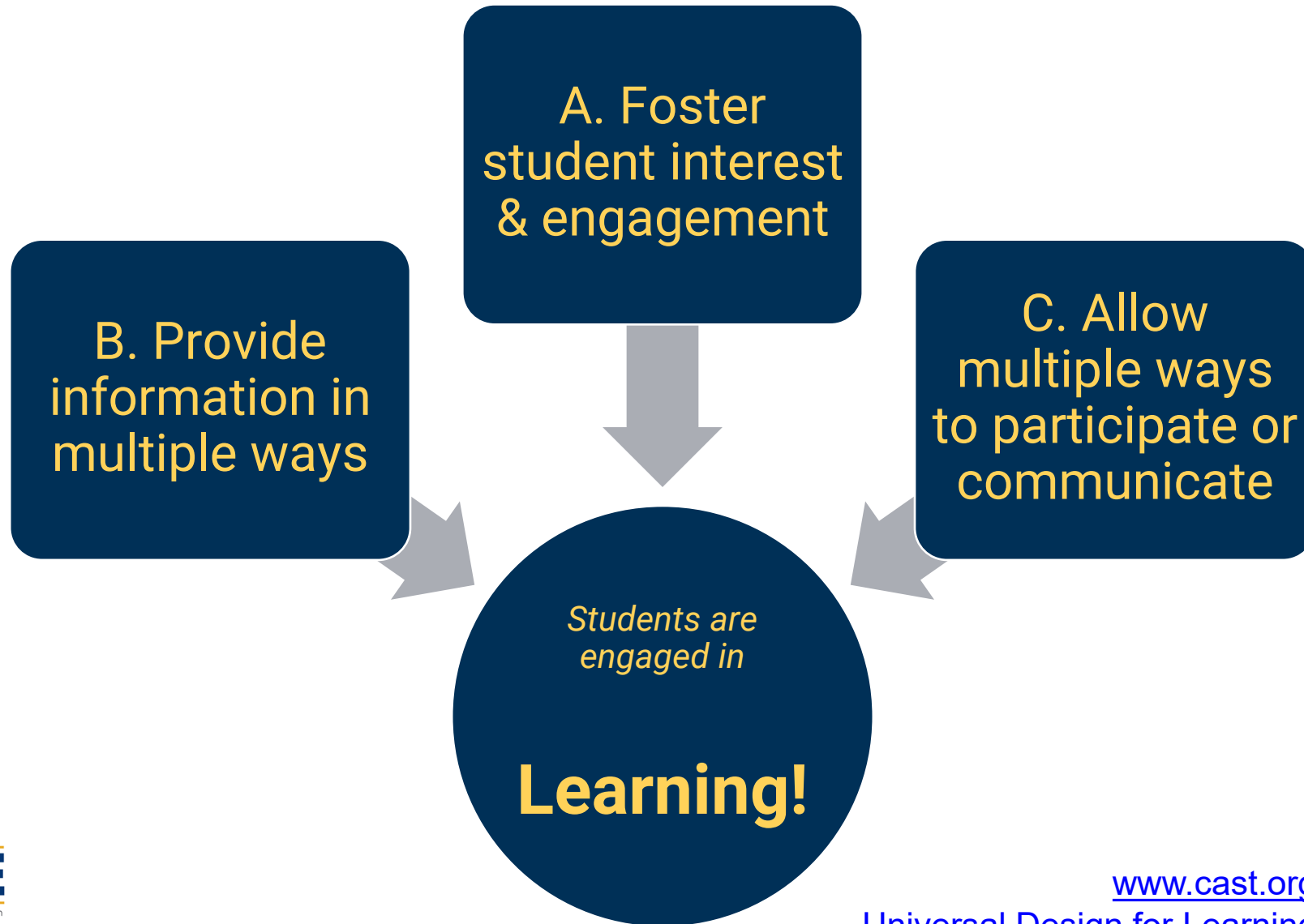
Category (or Topic/Activity) Focused

- PRC-Salttillo; TobiiDynavox; Forbes AAC; Control Bionics AAC Devices
 - WordPower vocabularies, MultiChat15; TD Snap; Grid 3-Supercore
- iPad Apps
 - TouchChat WordPower-tfl, proloquo2go-tfl, TDSnap-tfl, Avaz-tfl, Grid for ipad, GoTalk Now Lite-tfl

Literacy Focused | Phrase-Based

- iPad Apps
 - Proloquo4text-tfl, Clarocom-tfl, Dialogue-tfl | PODD, Clarocom-tfl

To Maximize Learning? Include AAC Methods



GADoE/TFL Assistive Technology Partnership

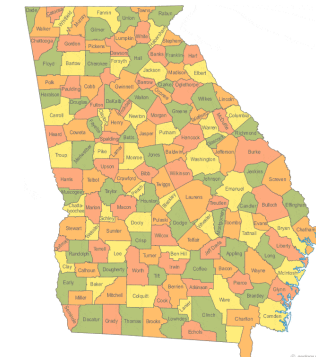
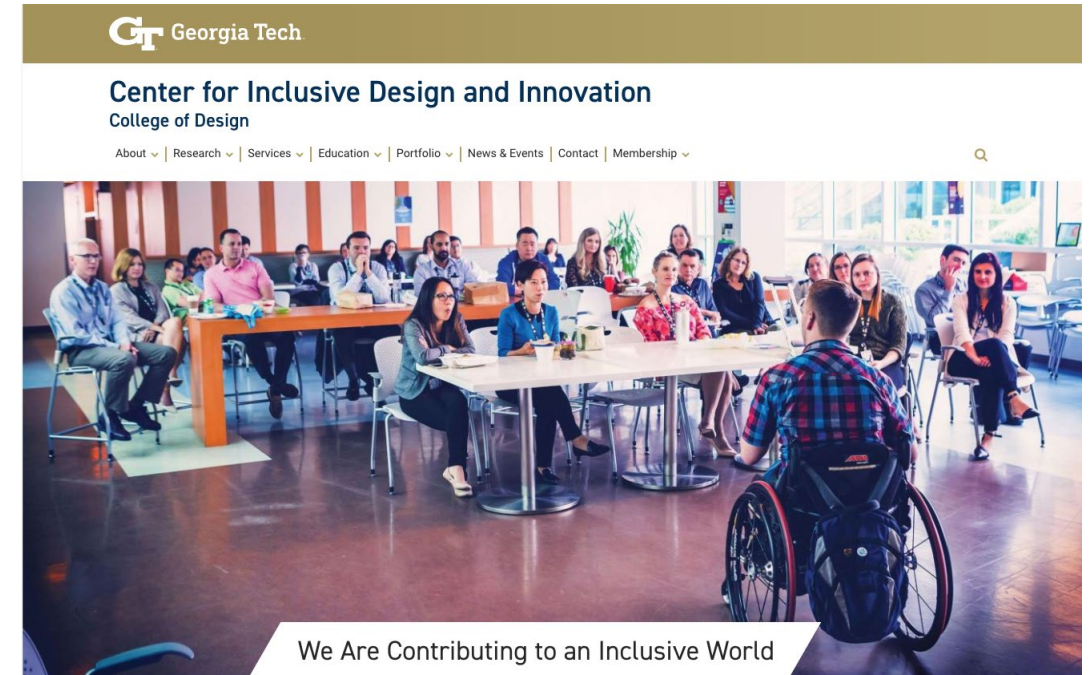
AT Partnership began January 2020



- Online AT Portal - AT Support for GA school districts, state schools, and LEAs
 - Request AT/UDL software tools for students with IEPs
 - Request AT device demos or loans for 4-6 week trials
- Manage GIMC – processes (Braille, AEM)
- EdTrade, summer 2023 – online database focused on AT Reuse between districts/LEAs

Center for Inclusive Design and Innovation

- Disability-related research
- Accessibility consulting – ICT and UX
- Captioning and Described Media Services
- Professional E-Text Production
 - * GADoE & TFL AT Partnership Services *
- Braille and AEM
 - K-12 through GIMC
- Assistive Technology Team (Tools for Life)
 - AT Device Demonstrations & Loans, Information/Support
 - AT/UDL Software – Read&Write, EquatIO
 - EdTrade – AT Reuse Database



Questions?



Contact Us

Tools for Life, Georgia's Assistive Technology Act Program

Center for Inclusive Design and Innovation

Georgia Institute of Technology

1-800-497-8665

www.gatfl.gatech.edu

info@gatfl.gatech.edu

Instagram: [@gatoolsforlife](https://www.instagram.com/gatoolsforlife)

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