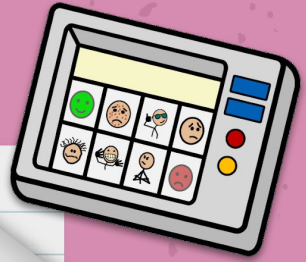
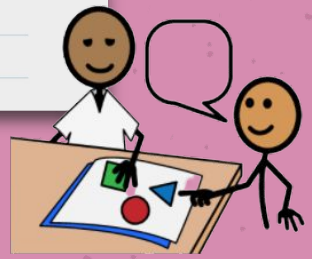


AAC & CORE VOCABULARY

DANI ACKERMAN & AMANDA NAMORATO



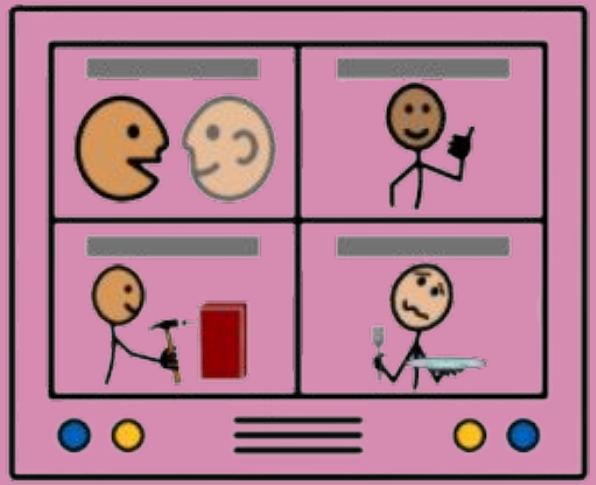
What is the GOAL of AAC?

SPONTANEOUS

NOVEL

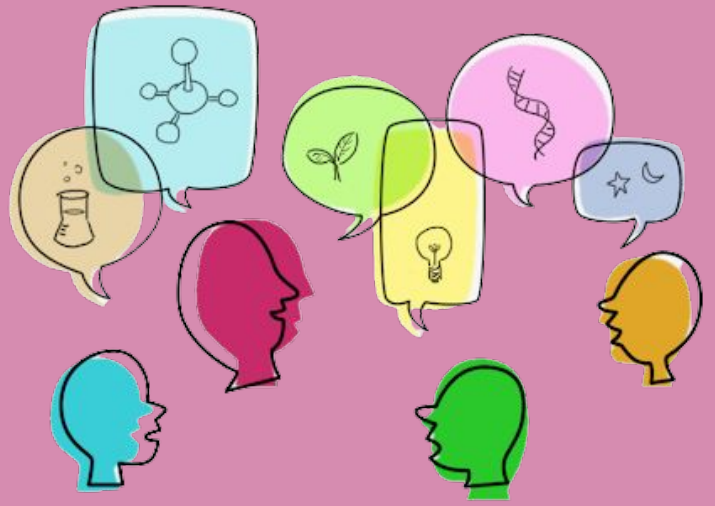
UTTERANCE

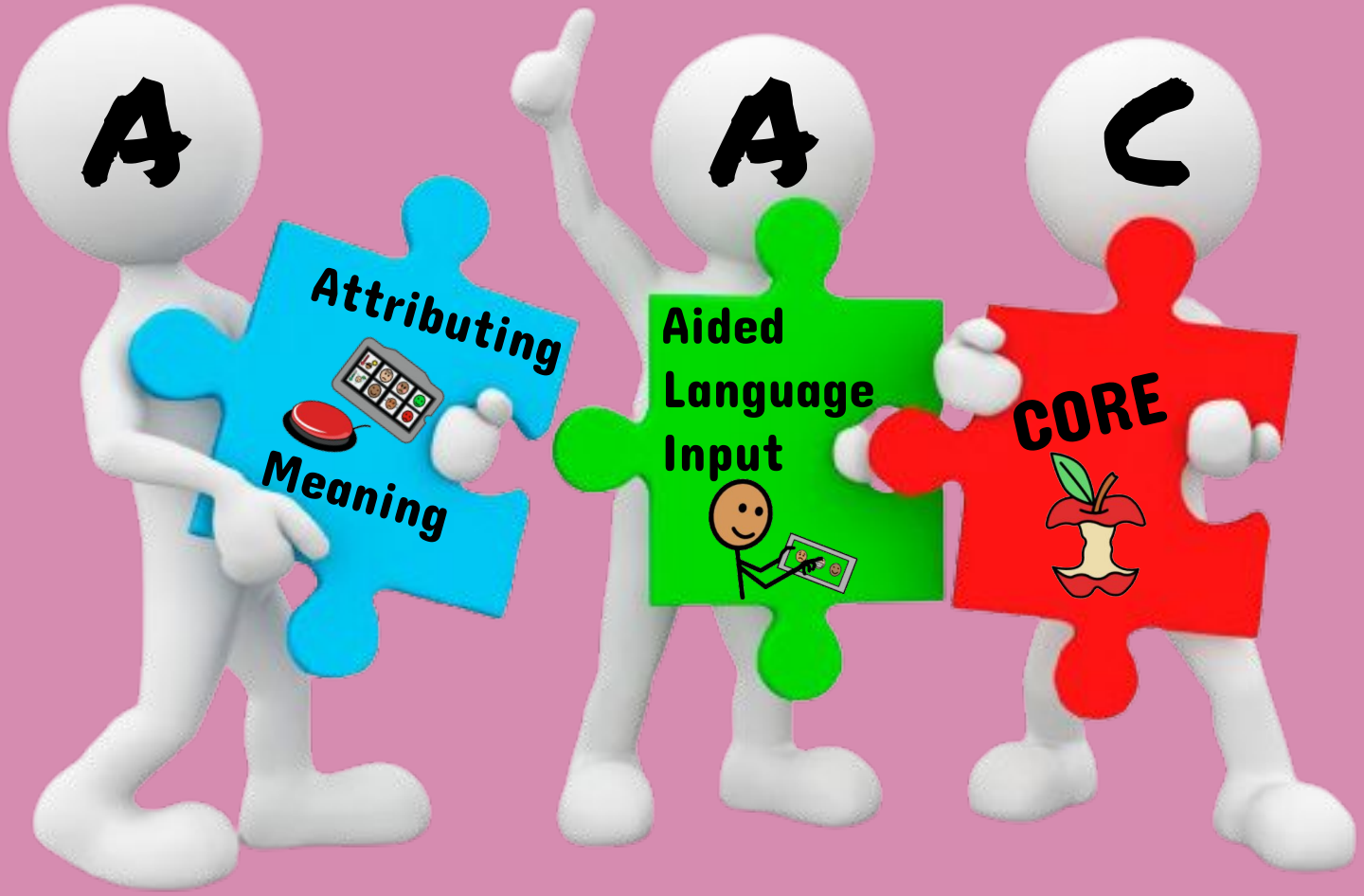
GENERATION



We want our kids to be *autonomous communicators:*

Being able to say what they want to say, to whoever they want to say it to, whenever they want to say it, and however they choose to say it!




A
Attributing
Meaning
A
Aided
Language
Input
C
CORE

AAC Ice Breaker:
You're meeting a friend at a bar for drinks.

AAC Ice Breaker: Can you do these?

- Call your friend over to where you're sitting
- Order a drink
- You get a drink and it's horrible. You want to try your friend's instead or to tell the waiter you want something else.
- You want to ask your friend if they like their drink.
- You want to order another drink.
- You want or need to leave.

AAC Ice Breaker

I	COME	HERE	GO
YOU	WANT	MORE	LIKE
DON’T	DRINK	THAT	DO

01

AAC-Best Practices

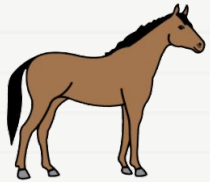
CORE

- High frequency conceptual words
- Increased opportunities for aided language input
- Flexible use across settings
- If a device reflects the language being used around them, the adults teaching them language can provide more aided language input
- Can be used to accomplish all language functions

85% of what speaking individuals say every day can be expressed with 250-350 words

FRINGE

- Specific set of low frequency words that are specific to a person or activity
- More narrow meaning
- Easier to teach
- 20% of our vocabulary
- Can't be applied across settings

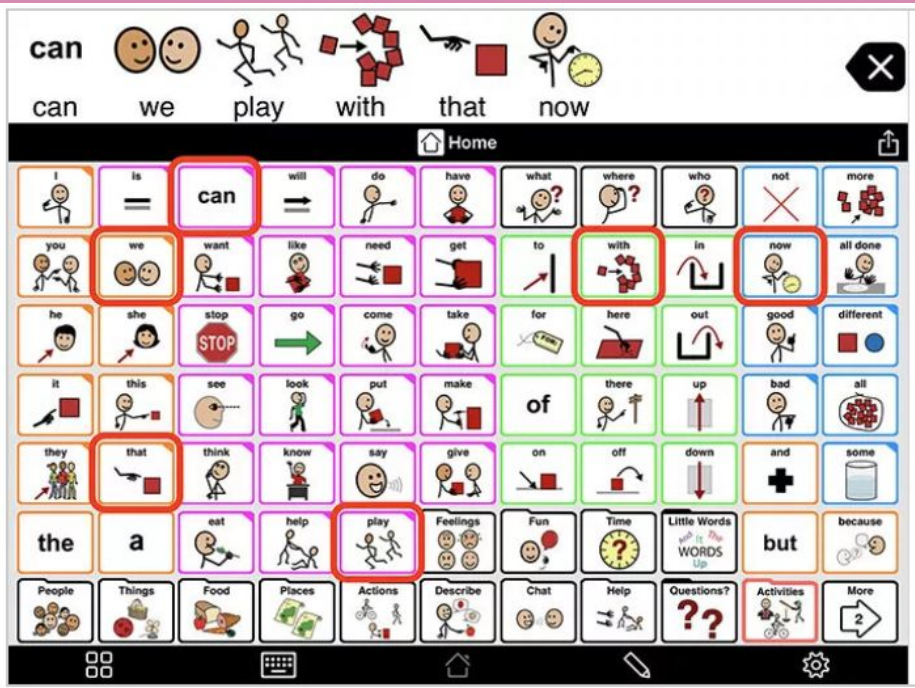


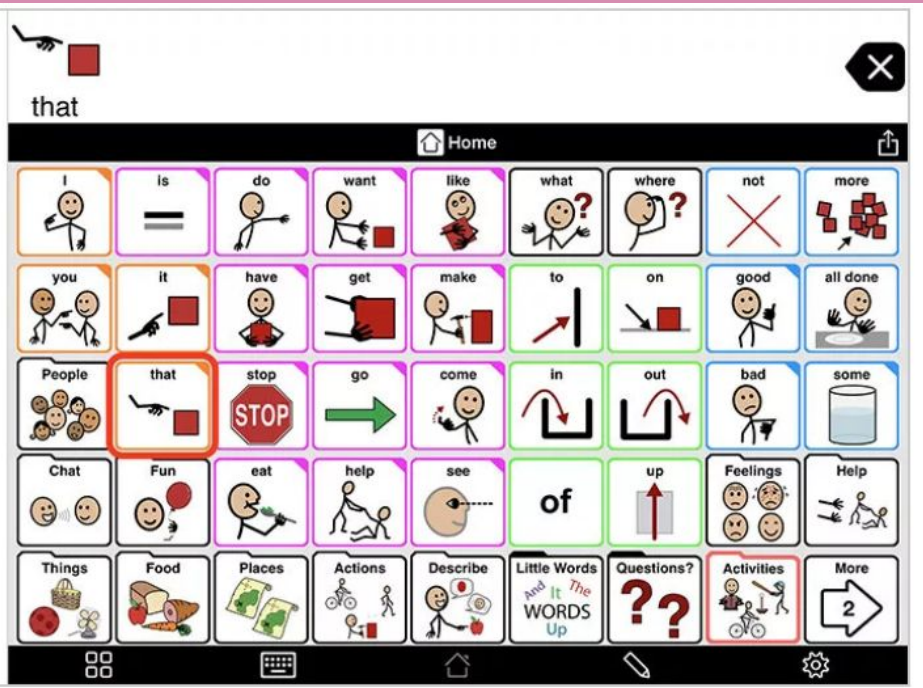
Most parents and educators continue to find AAC overwhelming.

Over 80% do not use Proloquo2Go's recommended setup. As many as 40% choose to have fewer than 20 buttons per page.

With such a small grid, language and communication becomes limited.

Larger grid size=more language on a single screen





77

Giving an AAC learner MORE words is so beneficial. It gives them more to say, and allows them to build language.

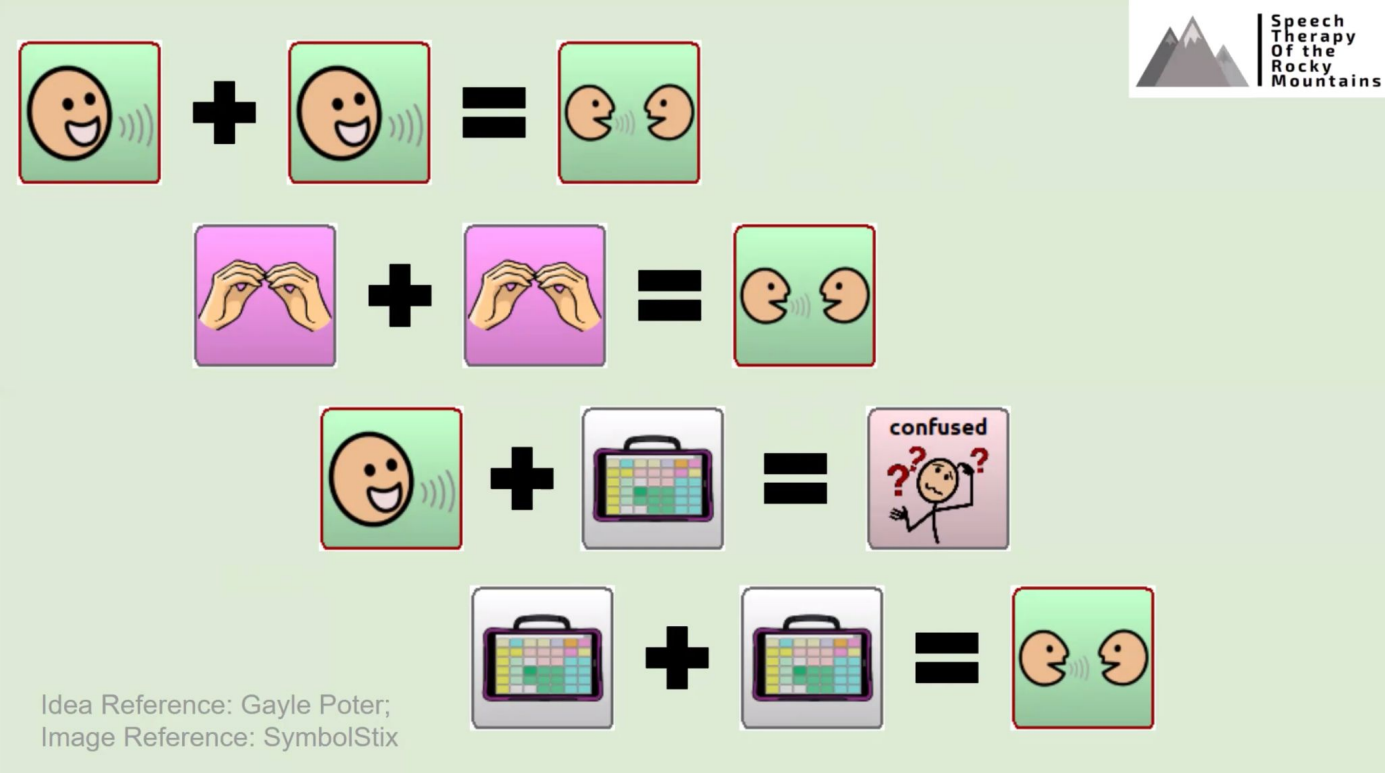
45

2

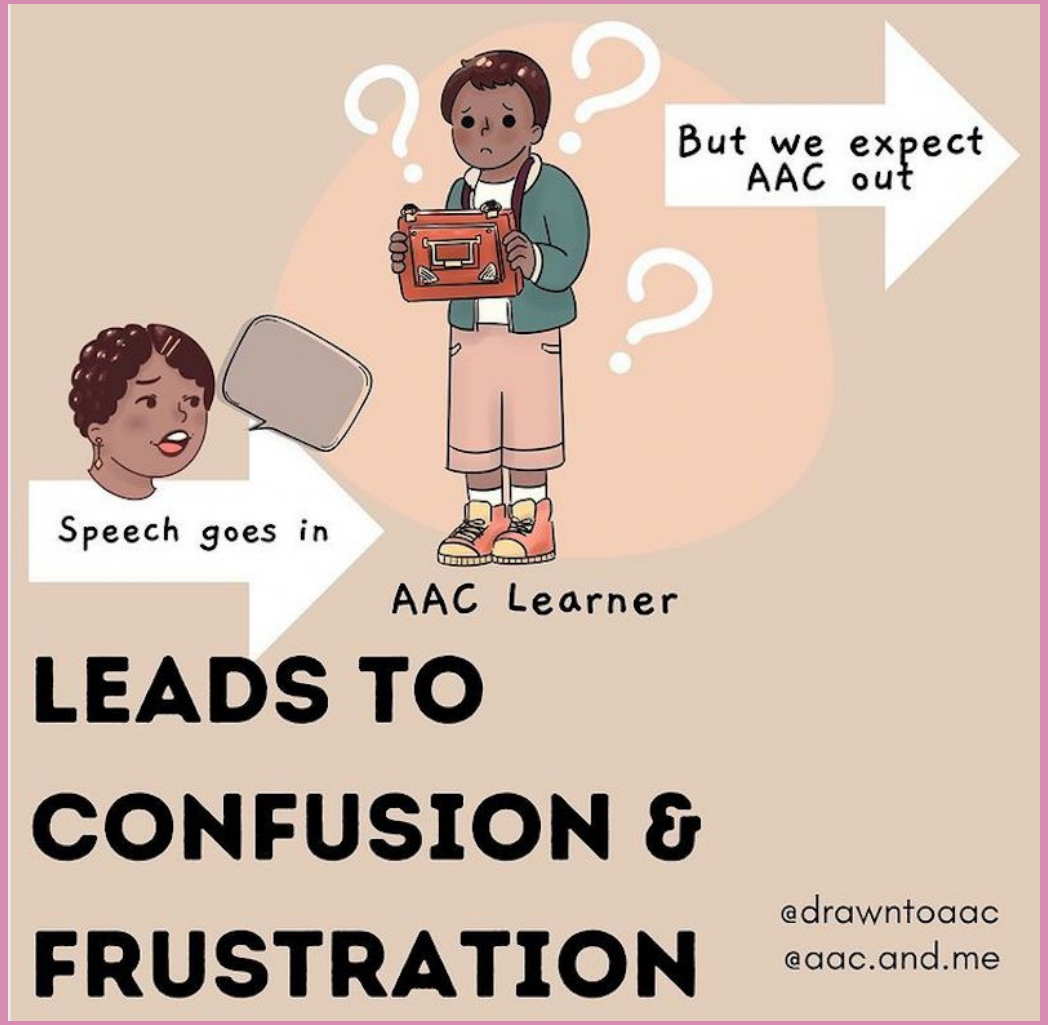
Aided Language Input

A research-based strategy in which communication partners highlight symbols on the AAC system as they interact verbally with the person using AAC.

SPEAK AAC TO TEACH AAC

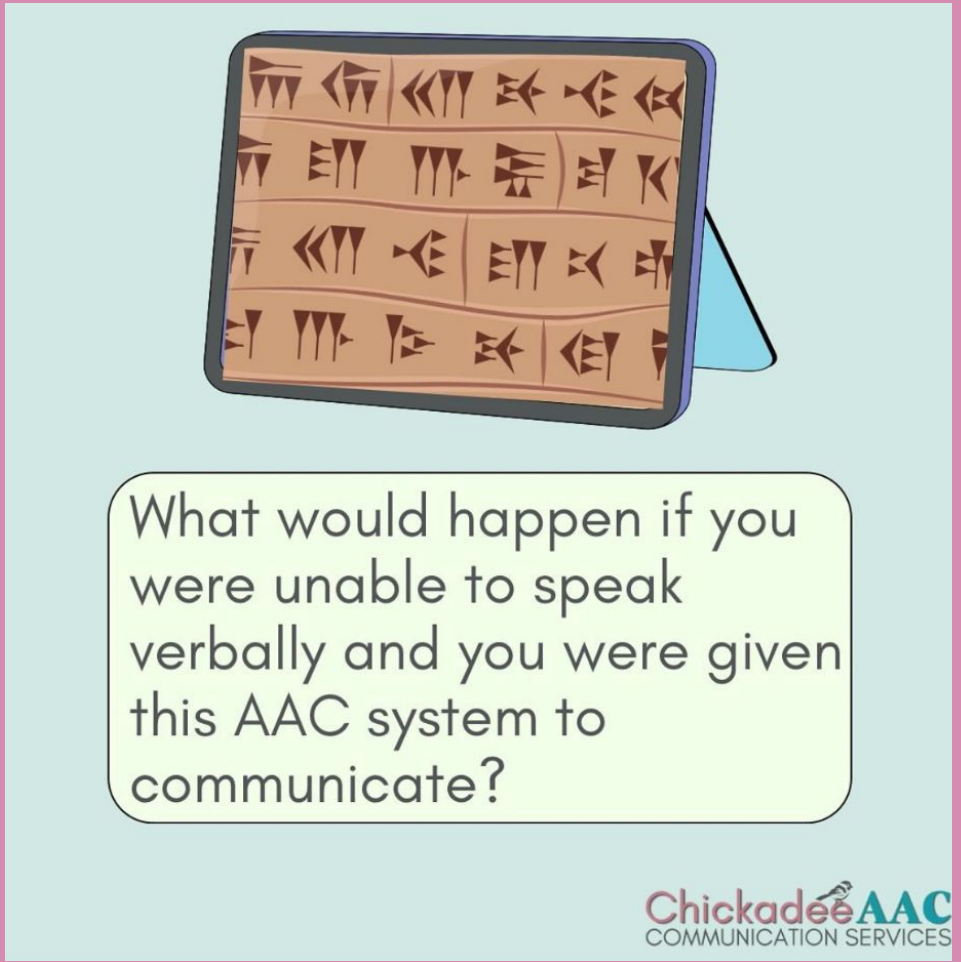


Research shows that young children need to hear about 21,000 words per day to develop their vocabulary and overall language abilities..



"There is an unfair expectation that AAC users should be proficient with the use of their device with far less exposure to the language they use."
-Kathryn Dorney

Just because symbols resemble common items and things in our environment doesn't mean that they have meaning to our AAC users.

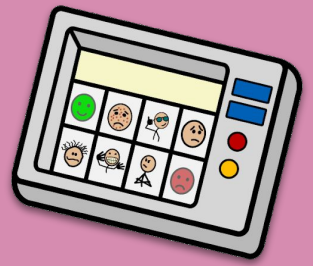


Teaching your child to use an AAC device is like teaching them a new language. Think about the best way to learn Spanish...

- If you only took a 45 minute class each week, how long would it take you to become fluent?

- If you immersed yourself in Spanish, how fast would you become fluent?

Teaching your child to use a device is no different!



BY 18 MONTHS
babies have heard
4,380 HOURS
OF SPOKEN LANGUAGE
and we don't expect them to be fluent speakers
YET
If AAC learners only see symbols modeled for communication twice weekly for 20-30 minutes, it will take
84 YEARS
for them to have the same exposure to aided language as an 18 month old has to spoken language.
statistic from Jane Korsten - QIAT Listserv 2011
photo by Rachael Langley - AAC Specialist

So how do we do this?

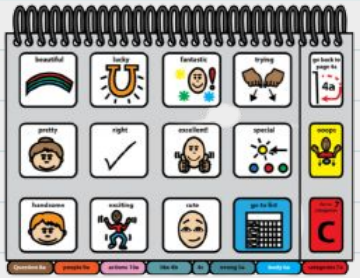
Modeling without Expectation:

Using the AAC users device to talk without ANY expectation of them using it in that moment.

No expectation means:

- We are not asking questions
- We are not prompting our learner to imitate us
- We are not trying to get our learner to say anything in particular

Modeling without expectation means making AAC another language spoken at home and in the classroom!



you **do not** need to press each button for every single word you speak.

ChickadeeAAC COMMUNICATION SERVICES

INSTEAD - speak the grammatically correct sentence and press a button with a meaningful key word.

ChickadeeAAC COMMUNICATION SERVICES

Provide **repeated** models of your target word, but **vary** your sentences.

ChickadeeAAC COMMUNICATION SERVICES

After providing a few models of your target word, hold your child's AAC device within their reach and WAIT. They may say the target word without prompting.

ChickadeeAAC COMMUNICATION SERVICES

The general rule for **ANALYTIC** language processors is to model **1 more word** than your child typically communicates on their device.

Beginning AAC user

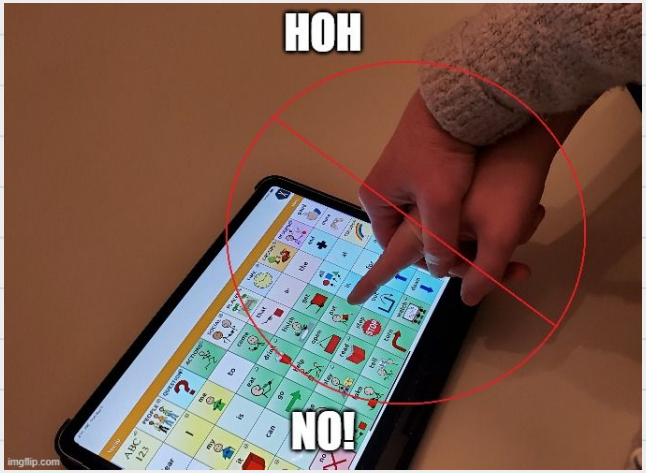
Single Word AAC user

Two Word AAC user

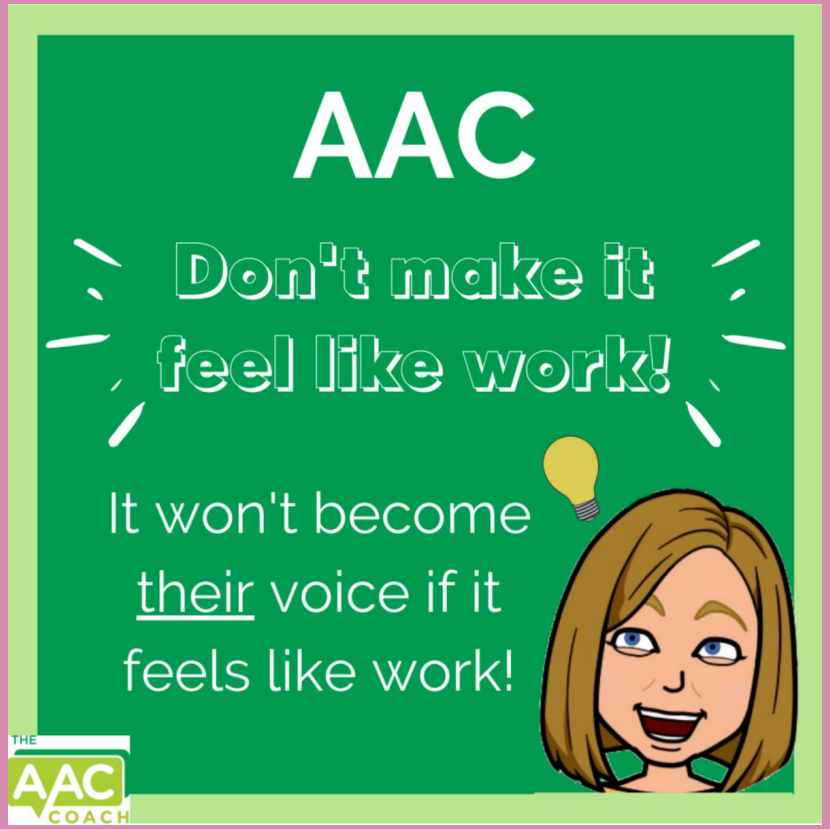
ChickadeeAAC COMMUNICATION SERVICES

Hand over hand?

It has been shown that modeling is more effective than hand-over-hand prompting for learning skills effectively.



So how do I get started at home?

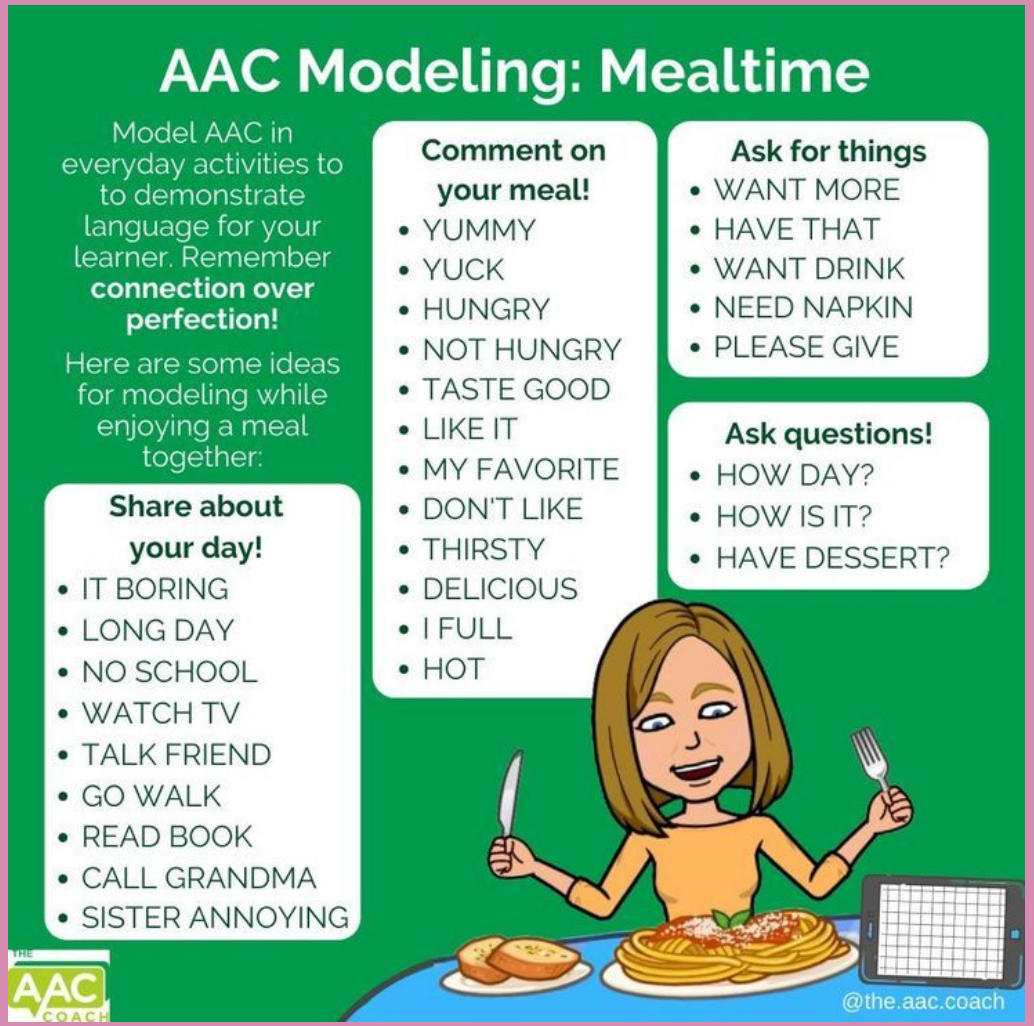


1. ROUTINES:

-Pick one routine to model AAC.

-Remind yourself to focus on modeling without expectation during that routine.

-It may feel difficult and clumsy—it will get better!



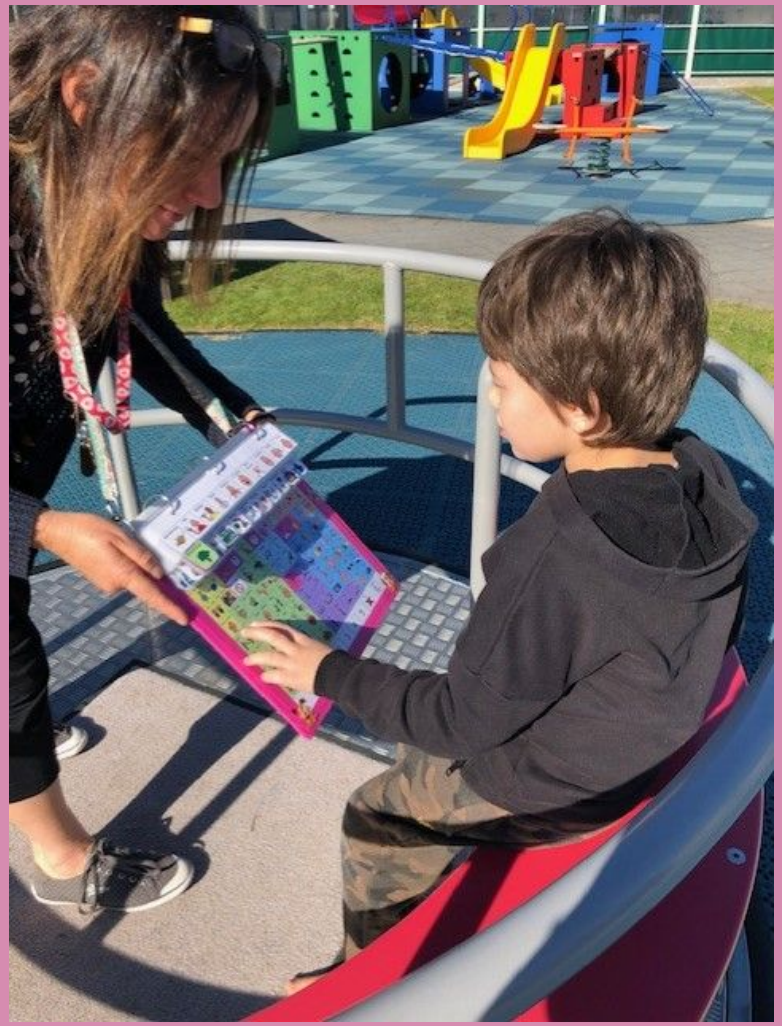
2. Model CORE:

-Pick one highly motivating core word to model consistently throughout a preferred task/activity.

-Model without ANY expectation.

-Set up Communication Temptations.

-Use low tech symbols around the house



3. Include everyone:

-It takes a village to learn and teach AAC.

-Include parents, grandparents, siblings, cousins, friends, etc.

-Normalize the use of AAC.

-Speak AAC to teach AAC

4. Customize:

Make sure to customize your child's device to include their preferences.

Add:

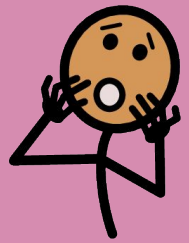
- Favorite foods
- Family and friends
- Favorite toys
- Favorite places

We are more motivated to talk about the things we love!

5. Connect:

- Acknowledge, honor, and celebrate all forms of communication
- Try to make a connection to a known context
- Use AAC to model what you may think your child means and expand on it
- Provide honest feedback if you don't understand

Misconceptions and Fears:



Mistakes and uncertainty:
Fear of doing it incorrectly shouldn't keep you from starting or persisting—we ALL make mistakes. Show your child that it's okay to make mistakes when communicating and learning!

If my child communicates verbally, do I have to make them say it on their device too?:
No, no one likes to repeat themselves—our goal is communication (just model for future use)

STIMMING:
All my child does it "stim" on their device: if we attach the word "stimming" to "non purposeful communication" we have identified our AAC user as someone who isn't trying to learn or make progress.

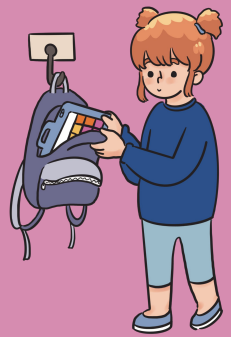
Too many buttons:
More symbols=more opportunities to learn language

Will AAC restrict verbal language development?

- Research shows that AAC does NOT restrict verbal language development
- Use of AAC in conjunction with verbal language can ease frustration and provide avenues for communication during times that are more difficult for the communicator
- Remembering our goal: COMMUNICATION

Add your email to the list going around if you would like access to a more in depth presentation.

Questions? Feel free to email us:

Dani Ackerman
dackerman@sachem.edu

Amanda Namorato
anamorato@sachem.edu