

# Engineering the Environment to include AAC

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## 1. Types of Communicators

- Emerging
- Context Dependent

## 2. Speaking Partners

- Dominate interactions
- Predominately ask questions
- Dominate conversational turns
- Interrupt
- No pausing
- Focus on technology
- Don't confirm message content

## 3. AAC Communicators

- Passive communicators
- Use multimodal approaches
- Rarely initiate interaction
- Express limited speech acts
- Use restricted linguistic forms

## 4. Routines and Activities

- Choosing routines
- Social
- Classroom
- Pre-Voc/Vocational

## 5. Prompts and Cueing

- Shadow Light Cues
- Descriptive Feedback
- Visual Bridges
- 30 second rule

## 6. Organization

- Thematic
- Categorical
- Semantic and syntactic
- Alphabetic
- Frequency of use

## Resources:

- 12 Texts a Day - Maximizing Down Time! (Musselwhite, 2008) June 2008 Tip of the Month;  
[www.aacintervention.com](http://www.aacintervention.com)
- Augmentative Communication, Carol Goosens' and Sharon Crain (Blue & Red binders); Don Johnston Developmental Equipment, Inc.
- Sarah Blackstone, Augmentative Communication Inc.,  
<http://www.augcominc.com>, One Surf Way, # 237,  
Monterey, CA 93940
- Classroom Strategies, A series of publications of the Bridge School, [www.bridgeschool.org](http://www.bridgeschool.org), (650) 696-7295
- <http://www.lburkhart.com>
- <http://family-friendly-fun.com/disabilities/assistive-technology/augmentative-communication.htm>
- [www.givinggreetings.com](http://www.givinggreetings.com)
- [www.dotolearn.com](http://www.dotolearn.com)
- Linda Hodgdon, QuickRoberts Publishing
- Orange County Public Schools Assistive Technology Team

It has been proven that students use their communication systems in the way they were first trained to use them. If the student is taught to use the system in a structured, stimulus-response format ("Show me the BALL"; "Where's the BALL?") they tend to use the system only when asked to do so. I call it the "testing format". If, however, the student is trained in a highly interactive format, he/she tends to use the system in a spontaneous and interactive manner.

Aided Language Stimulation (Goosens', Crain & Elder) is a teaching strategy in which the communication partner highlights symbols on the user's communication display as the partner interacts and communicates verbally with the user. This reinforces the use of the symbols for communication (which is what we want students to do!) and validates the communication system that the student is using. It also mimics the natural way children without disabilities learn language.

When Aided Language Stimulation is used on a routine basis, during all classroom activities, there is no need to conduct BORING (yes, I do mean boring) stimulus-response training and no need to set aside therapeutic time to work on symbol comprehension.

This technique can be used with low cognitive functioning students as well. Constant exposure to the symbols will encourage them to learn and use the symbols appropriately. After all, we don't start talking to babies only when they are ready to understand, do we?

In this model I encourage you to work in the classroom, working directly with the aides and teacher to facilitate communication. Using a pull-out therapeutic model does not maximize your time and the student's learning.

### **Communication Interaction Strategies:**

Employing these strategies will create more opportunities for your students to communicate.

- ENVIRONMENTAL ARRANGEMENT - Have desired items in view but out of reach in order to create the need for students to ask for them.

- NOVEL ELEMENT - During a familiar routine introduce something novel. For example, produce a paper spoon during a Kool Aid making activity
- SABOTAGE - Create a situation where the student must ask for help. For example, remove the chair from the computer station so the student must ask for one, or give the student an item in a container that he/she can not open so that the student must ask for help.
- OVERSIGHT - Leave something out of a familiar routine. For example pretend you are about to pour the juice with no cup on the table.

### **Choose Routines for AAC Use**

A student's success in using AAC can often depend on the activity or routine chosen for implementation. So:

- Choose routines that occur frequently. This allows for lots of "natural practice".
- Choose routines in which the student already attempts to communicate (vocalizations, gestures, eye pointing).
- Choose routines in which the student and the communication partner(s) have time for communicative interaction.
- Choose routines that are feasible for using the communication aid.

### **Suggested Routines**

Social: greeting students/teachers in the hall; telling jokes/riddles

Classroom: Assigning jobs to students; participation during morning routine; choosing and then participating in a leisure time activity with a peer; circle time; cooking and art activities; reading repetitive line books

Pre-Voc/Vocational: greeting co-workers, asking for supplies needed for task; explaining steps in a task; asking to take a break; requesting assistances; asking for more work to do.

## Prompt Hierarchy

When cueing an AAC user it is best to start from the least amount of cueing, setting the highest expectation possibly that "they can do it" and then slowly adding cueing or prompting as necessary. The following hierarchy moves from the least direct cue to the most direct cue.

1. **Pause** - Following a question, statement, or step in an activity, focus attention on the student and ... PAUSE. If there is no response... PAUSE. If no response then...go to step 2.
2. **Question Cue** - Ask a wh-question such as "What do you need?", "Where does it go?", or "Who goes next?" and then PAUSE. Follow step 1.
  - If there is no response...go to step 3A.
  - If there is a partial response...go to step 3B.
3. **A. Request for Verbalization** - Ask a question that contains a choice such as "Do you want the car or the blocks?" and then...PAUSE
  - B. Partial Prompt** - Say to the student something like "Tell me what you want.", "You need to ask me.", or "Use your pointing finger." And then... PAUSE.
4. **Full Model** - Provide a full model for the student to imitate (using his AAC system!) and ... PAUSE.