

# Aided Language Input Staff Training



## Primary Project Goal:

Adults supporting students using AAC will gain competence in using the student's form of communication, for the purpose of providing aided language input. Progress will be shown through an increase in consistent and competent partner use of the student's form of communication (AAC System).

**Aided Language Input:** "a communication strategy that requires a communication partner to teach symbol meaning and model symbolic communication by pairing speech with graphic symbols or other forms of aided augmentative and alternative communication (AAC)."

There is a substantial research supporting the use of Aided Language Input with three main objectives:

1. To improve the student's understanding that their behaviors are communicative,
2. To teach students that symbols allow them to communicate with a larger audience and,
3. To improve overall language development through expanding messages.

*Project Core, "Research Specific to: Aided Language Input"*

## Training Process:

With administrative support, the Facilitator will conduct 15-minute training sessions, 3 times per week with staff directly supporting students. This staff may include the classroom teacher, speech language pathologists, paraprofessionals or educational assistants, and peer partners or helpers.

Staff will have short follow up assignments and self-reflection activities to support their learning.



## Training Timeline

### **WEEK ONE:**

Meet with administration to discuss training program, determine 3 times each week which are consistently available for training. Gain consensus for completing the training. Consider possible incentives for staff.

### **WEEK TWO:**

Send pre-training surveys to staff to document their comfort level with student AAC systems.

### **WEEK THREE:**

1. Conduct pre-training data collection using *Data Collection Forms* to gather baseline use of Aided Language Input (Modeling)
2. Choose initial target words and messages.

### **WEEKS 4-6:**

Conduct Week One and Week Two Training using *AAC Facilitator Training Plan*

### **WEEK 6: Optional**

Collect mid-training data using Data Collection Forms

### **ON-GOING:**

After each two-week training cycle, consider whether you have met your goals for staff use of Aided Language Input. If not, conduct another 2-week cycle. With changing targets, these 2-week cycles can continue until the team has made sufficient progress using the student's system.

### *How do we know we are making progress?*

There are two methods to determine appropriate progress is being made:

1. Data collection reveals an increase in the average number of models staff are producing with students; use of the AAC system with narration; length of models; and use of student's access method.
2. Staff surveys indicate an increased level of comfort and willingness to use the AAC system, as well as understanding of the expectations for the quantity of models produced during a typical day.

# AAC Steps To Learning: Steps 1-3



Please see [dtaschools.com](https://dtaschools.com)- AAC 101 Steps to Learning for more information and training materials.

## **Step One: Choose Target Words/Messages**

In this training program we are targeting high frequency and context specific targets. We recommend you select 1-4 high frequency core vocabulary words and one noun category theme to match academic instruction.

*Program Modification Needs: Emergent communicators may need to begin learning to communicate using highly motivating targets. Other communicators may access communication using pragmatic branches (PODD books or some AAC applications). The program may need to be modified by replacing Core Word targets with pragmatic branches or functional, motivating messages.*

*As you are training communication partners, be sure to give instruction in the location and use of these unique targeted words or pragmatic branches. Core vocabulary and academic themes may be appropriate for input and modeling only at first, with limited expectation that the student will use these words until they are more familiar.*

## **Step Two: Train Target Words/Messages**

Our second step is for partners to learn to produce the targeted word/phrases.

Practice will be in the form of non-communicative activities so the partner can concentrate on the production of the word, without adding the complexity of a social function. Students can and should be involved in this type of practice before they are expected to use the targeted word/message for functional purposes as well. During this training, however, we are concentrating on helping the partners model the use of the AAC system competently!

*We will accomplish this Training during **Week One** of our plan.*

## **Step Three: Take In- Modeling Target Words/Messages**

Our third step is for partners to learn to produce the targeted word/phrases for functional communication and begin to model the use of these words for the student using AAC.

This week partners will be learning how to use the targeted word/phrase for real communication. We will practice with other adults (co-workers, friends) first, and then being to model the use of the targeted word/message for the student, using the student's actual communication system and method of communicating.

*We will accomplish this Take In Modeling during **Week Two** of our plan.*

# Goals & Progress Monitoring

## Primary Project Goal:

Adults supporting students using AAC will gain competence in using the student's form of communication, for the purpose of providing aided language input.

**Aided Language Input:** "a communication strategy that requires a communication partner to teach symbol meaning and model symbolic communication by pairing speech with graphic symbols or other forms of aided augmentative and alternative communication (AAC)." There is a substantial research supporting the use of Aided Language Input to improve the student's understanding that their behaviors are communicative, that symbols allow them to communicate with a larger audience and, improve overall language development through expanding messages. *Project Core, "Research Specific to: Aided Language Input"*

## Data Collection:

- **Baseline Data:** To be collected 1-2 weeks in advance of trainings. Tracked by 3rd party, via asynchronous observation as possible. Subject of data collection will not be shared with adults. Data will be collected during two portions of the day, for unstructured conversational interaction between the adult and student. Conversational interaction will be defined by non-academic topics, non-directive social engagement. A simple tally of adult single message models will be collected over a defined time period.
- **Check In Sample Data:** Collected after first 2-week cycle, in same manner as baseline data
- **Post Intervention Data:** Collected after three 2-week cycles, in same manner as baseline data collection.

|                           |                                                                                       |
|---------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Duration of Sample</b> | Typically, 10-20 minutes                                                              |
| <b>Context of Sample</b>  | 1:1 interactions, adult: student                                                      |
| <b>Content of Sample</b>  | Conversational interaction for non-academic topics, non- directive social engagement. |
| <b>Measurement</b>        | Number of occurrences per minute (# of touches to device/number of minutes observed)  |

## Directions for Completing Pre/Post Intervention Data Sheets

**Observe** a 10–20-minute interaction between the student and the communication partner. This can be accomplished in two different ways:

1. Direct observation in the same room or by video/audio camera (synchronous) or
2. Indirect observation through video/audio recording (asynchronous)

**TIP:** *Try to make your observation as least intrusive as possible. Partners should not be aware of the target of your observation, as much as possible, to gain an accurate representation of the typical interaction patterns.*

### Document

- Complete student, staff & environment information. Circle the method the student uses to communicate with AAC. If this data collection is after training has begun/completed, note the number of weeks of training.
- The word or message modeled in the first column
- Put a check to indicate if the model uses the student's AAC system. A duplicate of the system is acceptable.
- Put a check to indicate if the partner is giving a verbal explanation, or narration, of the process to produce the word, for example, "I'm going to the 'core' page, scrolling down, and selecting the word."
- Put a check to indicate if the partner is using the student's access method. For example, the partner is scanning and using a switch just like the student; accessing by eye gaze etc.
- Put a check mark if the the model is more than 1 word
- STOP when you have either 1) documented 20 occurrences and filled the data sheet lines or 2) observed 20 minutes

### Calculate

- Tally each column and put the number in the total at the bottom
- To determine the models per minute (model/minute), Divide the number of models you documented during the session by the number of minutes you observed.
- Note this number at the bottom of the data sheet columns.

# Data Collection Sheet

|                   |       |          |                  |                   |       |
|-------------------|-------|----------|------------------|-------------------|-------|
| Staff Member      |       |          |                  |                   |       |
| Student           |       |          |                  |                   |       |
| AAC Access Method | Touch | Eye Gaze | Scanning         | Head Tracking     | Other |
| Date              |       |          | Pre-Intervention | # Training Weeks: |       |
| Environment       |       |          |                  |                   |       |
| Activity          |       |          |                  |                   |       |
| Discussion Topic  |       |          |                  |                   |       |

| Word/Message Modeled | Using AAC System | With verbal explanation /narration | Using Student's Access Method | >1 word model |
|----------------------|------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------|
|                      |                  |                                    |                               |               |
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|                      |                  |                                    |                               |               |
| Page 1 Totals        |                  |                                    |                               |               |

## Data Collection Sheet- Page 2

|              |  |
|--------------|--|
| Staff Member |  |
| Student      |  |

| Word/Message Modeled          | Using AAC System | With verbal explanation /narration | Using Student's Access Method | >1 word model |
|-------------------------------|------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------|
|                               |                  |                                    |                               |               |
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|                               |                  |                                    |                               |               |
|                               |                  |                                    |                               |               |
| Page 1 Totals                 |                  |                                    |                               |               |
| Page 2 Totals                 |                  |                                    |                               |               |
| <b>TOTAL ALL</b>              | ÷                | ÷                                  | ÷                             | ÷             |
| <b>Total Minutes Observed</b> | =                | =                                  | =                             | =             |
| <b>Average Per Minute</b>     |                  |                                    |                               |               |

# Facilitator Training Planning- Week 1

## Directions for Completing Facilitator Training Planning Sheets

### Choose Target Words/Messages:

There are 3 methods for choosing words/ messages to target:

- ASK the student using AAC which words/messages are most important. Ask familiar partners to help identify these words as well. These may include favorite family, foods, leisure or places.
- OBSERVE what the student is communicating through other methods (gestures/behaviors).
- RESEARCH to consider what words/targets are developmentally appropriate OR high frequency (core words).

*TIP: Students who are emergent communicators, learning language and AAC at the same time, may need more concrete motivating targets. Most students who understand and use a few symbols will benefit from high frequency words (core words) or messages (quick social messages). You may target these for consistency to ease the initial training for a group of staff members.*

**THEME Targets:** When working on teaching a items in a specific category of words, it is often efficient to teach an entire category of words, rather than focus on a single noun category. The method of navigating through pages to get to all of the words in the category is the same, allowing partners to learn a larger group of words within the same training week.

**BONUS Targets:** You may have staff AND students who need to move faster in their AAC learning. For these students, you may target 4-5 additional high frequency messages each week. This may also be an appropriate goal for staff who have completed the basic 2-week training and are ready to move through the training at a faster pace.

### Daily Self-Reflection Strategies:

- PAIR & SHARE: Participants pair off into groups of 2 and share their experience with their partner.
- VOLUNTEER SHARE: Participants volunteer to share their experience with the entire group for discussion.
- SPOTLIGHT SHARE: Facilitator selects a participant for a guided discussion of their experience.

# Facilitator Training Planning- Week 1

## Directions for Completing Facilitator Training Planning Sheets Cont.

### **Daily Activity Prompts:**

**PRACTICE SINGLE WORD/MESSAGE:** Remind participants of the targeted word and assist them in locating it on the AAC system.

**PRACTICE MESSAGE (LIMITED NAVIGATION):** Give the participants a short message to produce and assist them in locating the different words in the phrase. For example, for the target word “Go,” ask participants to say “I can go.”

**SENTENCE STARTER:** Give the participants a simple cloze sentence with a motivating fill in word. For example, for the target word, “Go,” ask participants to use the AAC system to complete the phrase, “I go \_\_\_\_\_.” selecting their own final word to fill in the blank.

# AAC Facilitator Training Plan Worksheet- Week 1

## DAILY LESSON PLAN OVERVIEW:

Review Target Word(s)- 2 minutes

Self- Reflection- 5 minutes

Complete Activity- 2-3 minutes

Discuss New Challenge for the week and progress- 5 minutes

| Target Selection                    | Word(s)/Message |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------|
| Core Word Target/Functional Message |                 |
| Theme (Category) Target             |                 |
| Bonus Targets                       |                 |

| Daily Self-Reflection Strategy |                 |                 |
|--------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| DAY 1                          | DAY 2           | DAY 3           |
| Pair & Share                   | Volunteer Share | Spotlight Share |

| Daily Activity Prompts           |                                        |                                                                          |
|----------------------------------|----------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| DAY 1                            | DAY 2                                  | DAY 3                                                                    |
| Practice Single Word(s)/Message: | Practice Message (limited navigation): | Sentence starter: (simple cloze sentence with a motivating fill in word) |

# AAC Partner Training Worksheet- Week 1

Staff Name:

| Targeted Word | Bonus Words |
|---------------|-------------|
|               |             |

| Self-Reflection | Question                                                                  | My Response |
|-----------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|
| Day 1           | How did you complete last week's challenge?                               |             |
| Day 2           | How did people respond?                                                   |             |
| Day 3           | How do you feel it went?<br>How could you improve the activity or result? |             |

| Daily Activity                        |                                                                           |  |  |  |  |  |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|--|--|--|--|--|
| Day 1<br>SIMPLE PRACTICE              | Find word, repeat 5x using student's access method                        |  |  |  |  |  |
| Day 2<br>IMITATION                    | Use word in provided sentence                                             |  |  |  |  |  |
| Day 3<br>STRUCTURED<br>GENERATIVE USE | Using provided sentence prompt, produce a sentence using targeted word(s) |  |  |  |  |  |

| Challenge             | DAY 1                                           | DAY 2                                                   | DAY 3                                          |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|
| In the next 2 days... | Show a co-worker how you say the targeted word. | Show a co-worker how to say the new phrase you learned. | Use the sentence you created with a co-worker. |

## Facilitator Training Planning- Week 2

### Directions for Completing Facilitator Training Planning Sheets

#### **Plan for Practice:**

Participants consider the question of the day and write their ideas on their worksheet. If time allows, discuss some of the participants ideas.

#### **User Guide Dictionary Development:**

During this activity, participants will begin to develop a simple guide to show how partners can produce and model specific targets using the student's AAC system. They will make a very short video of themselves (or including a partner) using the AAC system to say the word/message in the same manner the student communicates, as much as possible. For example, if the student is using switch scanning to communicate, the video will include the participant (adult) scanning and creating the message, just like the student.

*TIP: If the student is using an access method the partner cannot use regularly (such as eye gaze or a sip & puff switch) the participant will emulate the access method as closely as possible. If the student is using eye gaze, the partner will simply touch the targets on the device. The partner will verbally describe what they would do if using eye gaze, "I can look here (touch) to say ...." Once the student is familiar with how their partner models, this direct narration can be discontinued.*

#### **Making the Slideshow:**

Facilitators will select a slideshow program with which the participants are familiar to decrease the challenge of this activity. Both Powerpoint and Google Slides are great choices that can also be shared easily through One Drive (Powerpoint) or Google Drive (Google Slides).

#### **Use of the Guide Dictionary:**

The shared slideshow can be used for several purposes after the initial training. The dictionary can be used to train partners to support multiple students. It can also be used to train new partners how to assist the specific student they will be supporting.

## Facilitator Training Planning- Week 2

### Directions for Completing Facilitator Training Planning Sheets Cont.

#### Daily Challenge:

Each day the facilitator will introduce a new “challenge” to help participants begin to integrate the use of the Aided Language Input (modeling) into their typical routine.

#### Day One:

*Co-Worker Call Out:* Catch a co-worker modeling the use of the words

##### IDEAS:

- Give participants tokens, coupons or other small items they can easily hand to their co—worker to acknowledge they were “caught.”
- Offer a small reward for the person “caught” the most times (coffee card, iTunes card, candy bar, extra 15-minute break during the day, leave work 15 minutes early...)

#### Day Two:

*Use a counting system to count the number of times you use the word during the day.*

##### IDEAS:

- click a counter app on the participant's smart phone,
- create a simple tally on a dry erase board,
- drop marbles or other small counters into a jar and count at the end of the day,
- use a clicker or a tally counter (available on lanyards, rings and handheld)

*TIP: Adults need reinforcers too! Send out a short survey, or just ask participants to give you a list of their favorite little rewards. Everyone appreciates the recognition when they are learning something new!*

#### Day Three:

*Discuss a 10-minute time slot once a day to use the words consistently with the student*

##### IDEA:

- Consider doing a “Schedule Analysis” to delineate the typical daily activities to give you ideas for easy times of day to incorporate models of specific words/messages.
- Share your ideas! Write them on a Smart Board, poster board or dry erase markers in each room.

## AAC Facilitator Training Plan Worksheet- Week 2

### DAILY LESSON PLAN OVERVIEW:

Plan for Practice Discussion- 3 minutes

Complete Activity- 10 minutes

Discuss New Challenge for the week -3 minutes

| Plan for Practice | Discussion                                              | Examples |
|-------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|----------|
| Day 1             | How could I use the symbol during staff meeting?        |          |
| Day 2             | How could I use the symbol with co-worker during lunch? |          |
| Day 3             | How could I use the symbol after work?                  |          |

| User Guide Dictionary Development: | Materials Needed:                                                           |
|------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Video                              | Smart phone<br>Partner<br>Student AAC system                                |
| Insert Video into Slideshow        | Slideshow Template (Google Slideshow, PPT or PPT Online)<br>Computer/Tablet |
| Daily Implementation Plan          | Daily Target Worksheet in Slideshow or printed                              |

# AAC Partner Training Worksheet- Week 2

Staff Name:

| Targeted Word-Week 2 | Bonus Words |
|----------------------|-------------|
|                      |             |

| Plan for Practice | Discussion                                              | My Response |
|-------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|-------------|
| Day 1             | How could I use the symbol during morning meeting?      |             |
| Day 2             | How could I use the symbol with co-worker during lunch? |             |
| Day 3             | How could I use the symbol after work?                  |             |

| AAC User Guide Dictionary                                                                          |                                                                                                                                            |                                                                                    |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| DAY 1                                                                                              | DAY 2                                                                                                                                      | DAY 3                                                                              |
| Video the steps to say the word(s) using your student's access method, and navigating to the words | Develop Slide Show using template <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Insert video</li> <li>• Explain using text or photos</li> </ul> | Make a list of real-life use of the word(s) during typical daily school activities |

| Challenge             | DAY 1                                                               | DAY 2                                                                              | DAY 3                                                                           |
|-----------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| In the next 2 days... | Co-Worker Call Out: Catch a co-worker modeling the use of the words | Use a counting system to count the number of times you use the word during the day | Plan a daily 10-minute time slot to use the words consistently with the student |

# AAC Partner Skills Self-Reflection Survey

We are interested in your comfort level with AAC, your student's AAC systems and your thoughts about how to help!

Your name \_\_\_\_\_

Your school \_\_\_\_\_

1. Please rate your comfort level "talking with your student's AAC system" \*

*Mark only one oval.*

1      2      3      4      5

I'm not at all comfortable ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ I can say anything I want to!

2. Which statement best describes your use of the student(s)' AAC system for modeling communication in front of your student? \*

*Mark only one oval.*

- ☐ I want to learn to use the AAC system but haven't been trained yet. My  
☐ student appears to resist my use of their AAC system.  
☐ I can point out specific words and messages during structured, pre-planned activities  
☐ I can say a few messages spontaneously in less structured, conversational interactions. I can  
☐ have a fluent conversation with another person using the AAC system.

3. I believe talking to my student(s) using their AAC system is... \*

*Mark only one oval.*

1      2      3      4      5

not impactful at all to help them learn to communicate. ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ very important to develop their skills

4. How often do you believe a student needs to see a partner communicate with their AAC system/method in order to learn to use it effectively? \*

*Mark only one oval.*

- ☐ 0-10x a day  
☐ 10-50x a day  
☐ 50-100x a day  
☐ 100-200 x a day  
☐ 200 or more times a day.

Thank you so much for sharing your thoughts with us!



## Resources Consulted

"Aided Language Input Annotated Bibliography." *Project Core: A Stepping-Up Technology Implementation Grant Directed by the Center for Literacy and Disability Studies*, Center for Literacy and Disability Studies/University of North Carolina School of Medicine, [www.project-core.com/aided-language-input/](http://www.project-core.com/aided-language-input/). Accessed 8/19/2021