Understanding Aided Language Stimulation

Division for Special Education Services and Supports Webinar Series Supporting Students with the Most Significant Cognitive Disabilities

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What is Communication?

Communication is any act by which one person gives to or receives from another person information about that person's needs, desires, perceptions, knowledge, or effective states. Communication may be intentional or unintentional, may involve conventional or unconventional signals, may take linguistic or nonlinguistic forms, and may occur through spoken or other modes.

Guidelines for Meeting the Communication Needs of Persons With Severe Disabilities (asha.org)

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What is Aided Language Stimulation?

Aided language stimulation is a strategy that helps students with complex communication issues learn to use their communication systems and become successful communicators. Aided Language Stimulation provides students with the modeling and interaction they need to confidently use their communication systems in a variety of settings throughout their day.

Communication includes: Expressive, Receptive and Pragmatic Language

Expressive Language is the ability to express your wants and needs through verbal or nonverbal communication.

Receptive Language is the ability to receive and understand information.

Pragmatic Language refers to the <u>social language skills</u> that we use in our daily interactions with others, which includes what we say and how we say it.

What does communication look like?

Students with the most significant cognitive disabilities present with limited communication abilities as compared to their same-age peers. Some of these students develop unconventional and socially inappropriate means to communicate. The students usually display limited expressive and receptive language skills and immaturity in social interactions or pragmatic language skills.

Expressive Language

Verbal Communication

- Single words (spoken)
- Word combinations
- Sign language
- Text
- Pictures
- Icons

Nonverbal Communication

- Facial expression
- Crying
- Tapping/touching
- Tantrum
- Behavior
- Reaching
- Head shake

Receptive Language

Receptive Language for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities is often very limited and the students display the inability to:

- Follow simple commands

- Identify simple pictures/objects

- Respond to simple questions

- Understand a wide variety of vocabulary

Pragmatic Language

Pragmatic language for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities is often limited and display:

- Immature social judgement and decision making
- Difficulty understanding social cues and social rules
- Limited ability to follow rules for conversation
- Limited ability to communicate for social purposes

Video - Aided Language Stimulation
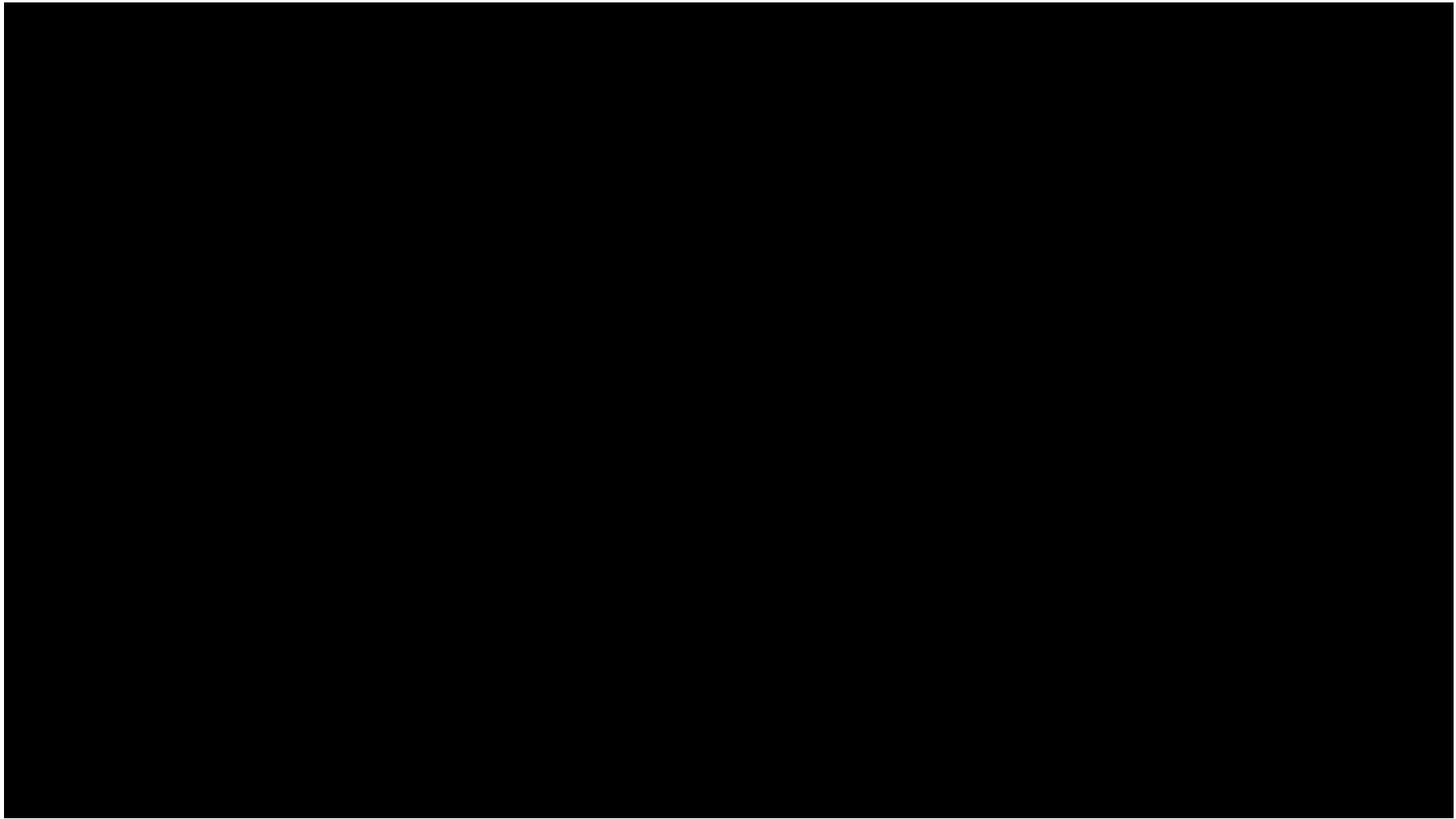
The Importance of Training

"Technology and Augmentative Communication Systems can be very powerful, but they are useless in enabling children to realize their potential without appropriate training and a supportive environment."

Linda J. Burkhart. What We Are Learning About Early Learners and Augmentative Communication and Assistive Technology. [Online] Available http://lburkhart.com, 11-5-04.

The Implementing AAC

Implementing augmentative alternative communication and assistive technology will consumes a lot of time and energy from therapists, teachers, parents and the **child**.

This is especially true if it is an addition to the curriculum instead of an integral part of it.

Remember: AAC Competency Takes Time!

The Implementing AAC Takes Time and Training

Think about the way that adults model language for babies when we expect them to speak. We speak to them so that they have hours and hours of input before they begin speaking back. Children acquire language through interaction. Children who are never spoken to will not acquire language.

The typically developing child will have been exposed to oral language for approximately 4,380 waking hours by the time he begins speaking at about 18 months of age.

The Implementing AAC takes Time and Training (for everyone)

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Language and Modeling

*   How many words does a typically developing child from an average working-class family hear per HOUR?

    1,251 (Hart & Risley, 2003)

*   How many words does a typically developing child from an average working-class family hear per YEAR?

    6,000,000 (Hart & Risley, 2003)

*   How many symbols does a child with a disability see other people use to communicate in one YEAR?

    Often…..**ZERO** (Miranda, 2003)

Hart, B. & Risley, T.R. "The Early Catastrophe: The 30 Million Word Gap by Age 3" (2003, Spring). American Educator.
http://www.aft.org//sites/default/files/periodicals/TheEarlyCatastrophe.pdf

AAC – PODD
(Pragmatic Organizational Dynamic Display)

AAC - Core Board

I, me, my	do	help	play	where	different
you, your	want	eat	look	what	no
Let's	go	stop	turn	there	more
it	is	drink	get	that	all done
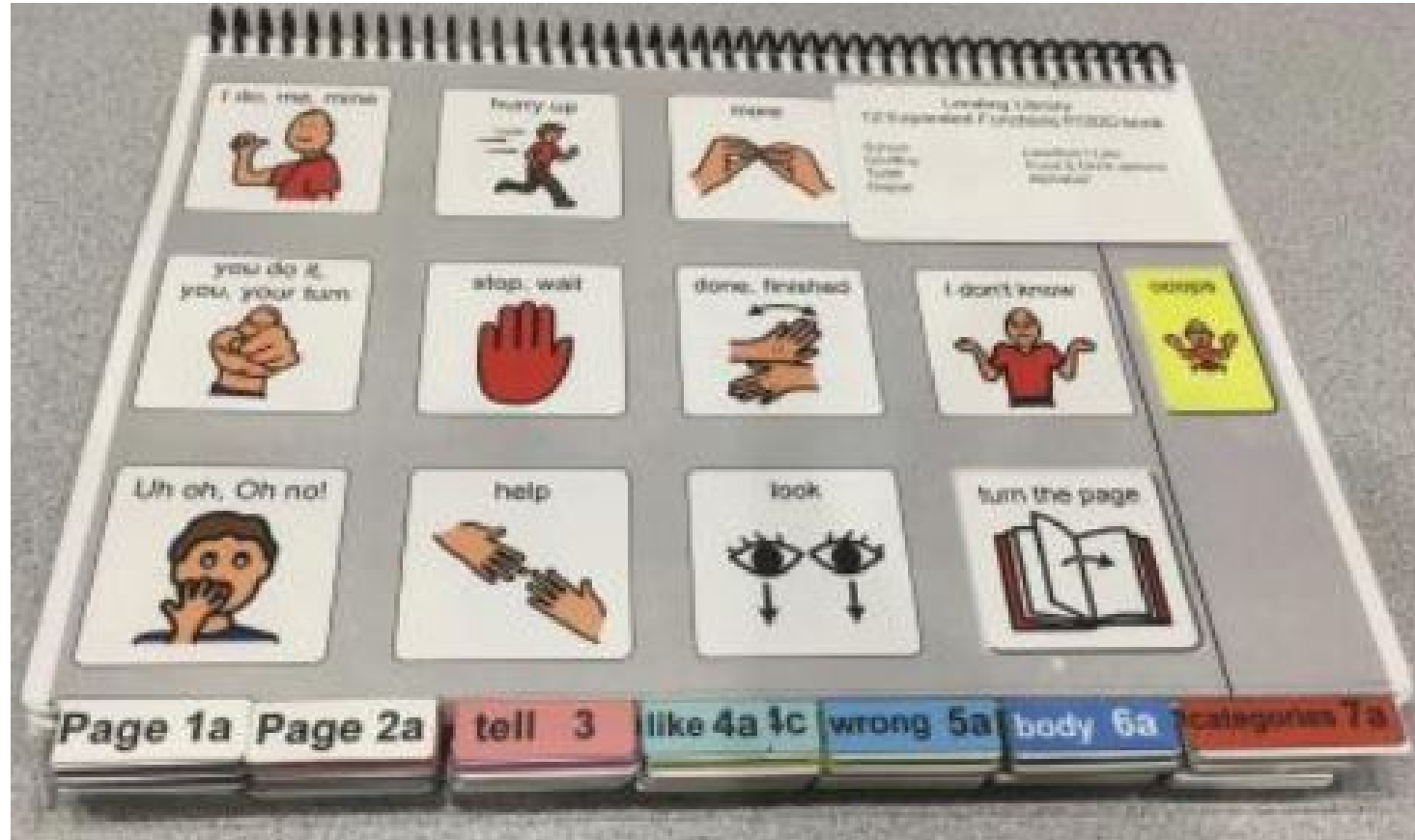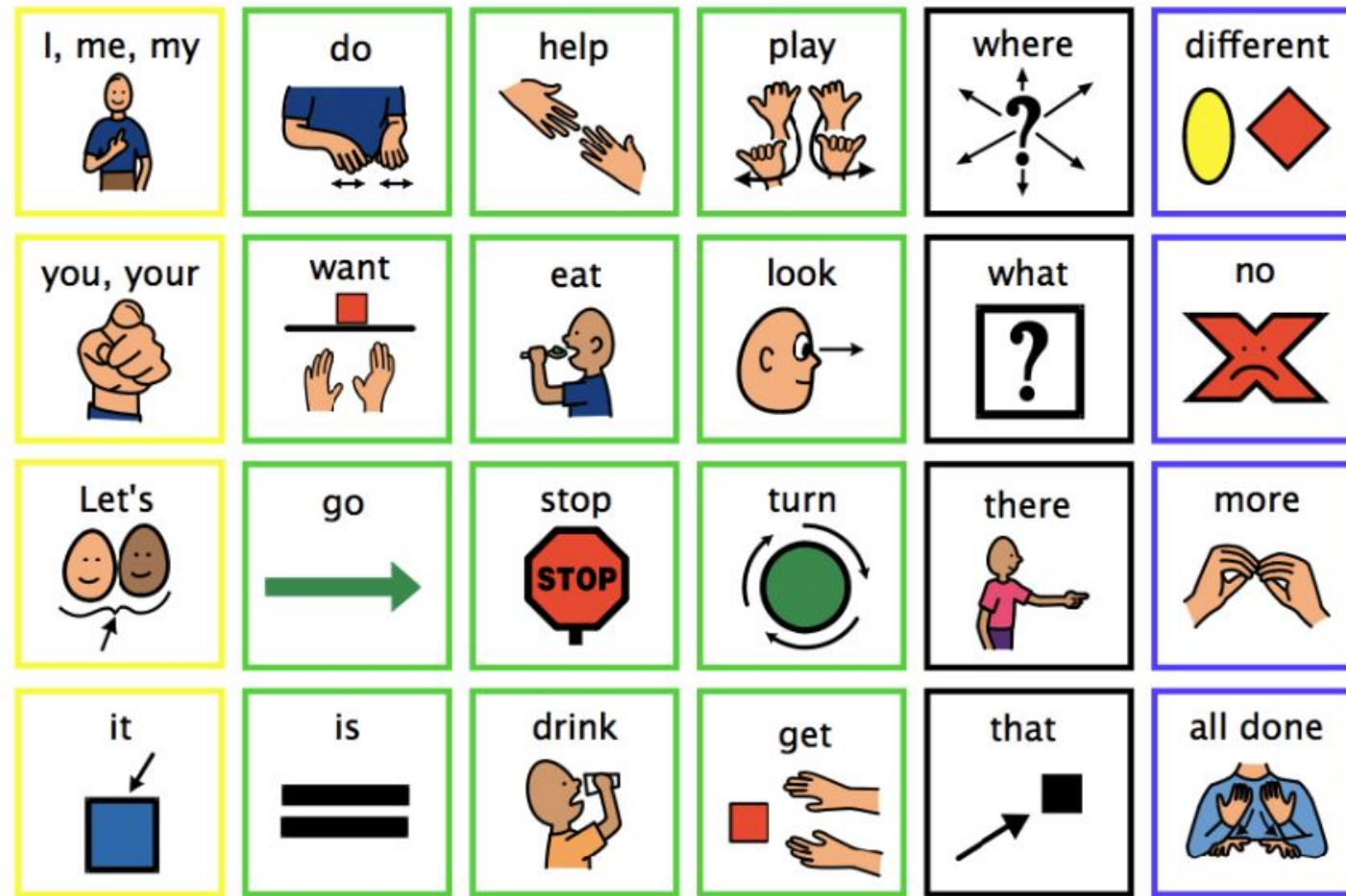
AAC – Eye Gaze

AAC – Speech Generating Device

AAC - Communication Board

Picture Symbol
Communication Bill of Rights

Guidelines for Meeting the Communication Needs of Persons With Severe Disabilities (asha.org)

Communication Bill of Rights (asha.org)

AAC – Teaching Communication

Consider an individual using AAC, who may only have modeling/teaching on the system during speech sessions (in the example below, twice a week):

If someone is using a different symbol set and only has exposure to it **two** times a week, for **20-30 minutes** each, it will take the alternate symbol user **84** years to have the same experience with his symbols that the typically developing child has with the spoken word in **18** months!!!

– **Jane Korsten**

Teaching Communication in a Supportive Environment

- Aided Language Stimulation

- Engineering the Environment

- Providing Robust Vocabulary

- Core Words

- Implementation Strategies

- Multimodal Communication

Communication

National Joint Committee for the Communication Needs of Persons With Severe Disabilities (NJC)

All people with a disability of any extent or severity have a basic right to affect, through communication, the conditions of their existence. Beyond this general right, a number of specific communication rights should be ensured in all daily interactions and interventions involving persons who have severe disabilities. To participate fully in communication interactions, each person has these fundamental communication rights**:**

National Joint Committee for the Communication Needs of Persons With Severe Disabilities (NJC)

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Communication Abilities

- Students with severe disabilities can be expected to use idiosyncratic communicative forms to communicate for a variety of communicative purposes
  - body movements
  - squeals and cries
  - expressions
  - behaviors [including aberrant])

Communication Abilities

- conventional communicative forms
  - gestures
  - vocal speech-like approximations
  - gaze
  - words
  - non-speech symbols to communicate for a variety of communicative purposes
    - requesting
    - protesting
    - greeting
    - commenting
- Receptively, this population may understand multiple symbol forms and even simple grammar, or may only possess general environmental awareness (Ogletree, Bruce, Finch, Fahey, & McLean, 2011).

Preparing students
for life.

www.gadoe.org

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