

Welcome to the module entitled, *Use AAC In Class*, the ninth module in the POWER: AAC training.

POWER: AAC is a project sponsored by the **Pennsylvania Training and Technology Assistance Network (PaTTAN)**. This training is one of a series of modules designed to build the capacity of local educational agencies to serve students with complex communication needs who require the use of augmentative and alternative communication systems.

The focus on Module 9 is on four purposes of communication and how they are applied in a POWER: AAC classroom. Example IEP goals are included in this module.

Training in the POWER: AAC Project is primarily self-directed. Each module is presented in a variety of formats, including a video format, PowerPoint presentation format and a print version of the PowerPoint with transcript notes. Some of the modules include supplemental presentation materials. Module 9 does not. Each module includes a pre and post test assessment.

Please complete the pre-test before starting this module.

In modules 2 through 8, you learned important principles of using AAC in the classroom.

In module 2, you learned that if you are currently using functional activities in a daily routine with lots of repetition, you can keep on using those practices as part of a POWER: AAC classroom. You also learned in module 2 that POWER: AAC practices can work with whatever curriculum has been adopted by your school or selected by you for use in your classroom. Plus, POWER: AAC practices are compatible with state standards that involve the development of communication skills.

In Module 3, you learned that it takes a collaborative team process to assess and select an AAC system for students with limited speech skills. It takes that same type of team process to implement an AAC system in the classroom.

In Module 4, you learned about core vocabulary. You learned that core vocabulary isn't something that you teach in isolation. Rather it is essential to all communication and is used across all school lessons and activities.

In Module 5, you learned about different ways to represent vocabulary. You learned about your responsibility, as a member of the teaching team, to monitor and document how well your students are using their representational systems and, as a team, to adjust or change the representational system being used.

In module 6, you learned how to use visual supports and scaffolds in your classroom, from core word walls and wall charts to supports for specific vocabulary instruction. You learned about the role of visual supports and scaffolds in building successful use of core vocabulary in a POWER: AAC classroom.

In module 7, you learned how communication partners facilitate communication of their students when they learn how to model on an AAC system; create communication opportunities; respond to students after they use their AAC systems; and ask questions that promote communication.

And in module 8, you considered how vocabulary is acquired through immersion and you learned about three explicit vocabulary instructional strategies to target the teaching of core vocabulary.

So, after completing all of these previous modules, what else is there to cover on the subject of using AAC in class?

There is always a lot of communicating going on in a classroom, much which doesn't have a direct connection with a specific lesson or teaching activity.

Throughout the day, students raise their hands to tell you something that they want or need.

Other times, they have information they want to tell you, maybe about their family or something simple, like a note from home.

They will communicate as part of being friends with each other, maybe by telling secrets or doing something together, like reading a book.

And they will all learn the social conventions that we use in order to be polite, like saying "I'm sorry" or "thank you."

These examples reflect the four purposes of communication which were suggested by Janice Light in her 1989 paper on communication competence. For a student in a POWER: AAC classroom, learning to communicate for these four purposes puts them on a path towards developing their own personal level of communication competence.

Let's start by considering the communication of wants and needs. The phrase "communicate wants and needs" is commonly used across the field of AAC and found on many student IEPs. But what does "communicate wants and needs" really mean and what does it look like in a POWER: AAC classroom?

The communication of wants and needs is actually a concept borrowed from the field of economics.

According to the website "*Social Studies for Kids*," a need is something you have to have; something you

can't do without. A good example is food. If you don't eat, you won't survive for long. Eating meets a physical need. The need for food is universal for all human beings and remains constant throughout your lifetime.

However, a want is something you would like to have. It is not absolutely necessary, but it would be a good thing to have. A good example is pizza. You need to eat, but you don't specifically need pizza to survive. You decide you want to eat pizza, while somebody else wants to eat a sandwich. Wants are unique and personal to the person. And what you want to eat today is going to change tomorrow, or next month, or next year.

You may be supporting students in your classroom with severe cognitive and/or multiple impairments. Many times, "needs" communication for students with severe impairments involves addressing negative conditions.

You and your team may read and interpret body language or other physical signals to know when your students are thirsty, hungry, uncomfortable, tired, sick, or unhappy. Failure to recognize and respond to a student's communication signals can result in health concerns and, in some students, challenging behaviors. Therefore, you give meaning to the signals, such as *"I hear you whining. I think you are uncomfortable or something hurts."* You model the word "hurt," then you provide a word to express the need, *"You need to change position,"* while modeling the word "change" on the AAC system. You meet the student's need.

You understand when the student has had his need met by reading more body language, such as smiles, laughter, or relaxation of the student's body. Again, you provide and model words, such as *"Now you are comfortable. It is good. You are happy again."*

Each of the words you modeled is a core vocabulary word and should be part of your student's AAC system in a POWER: AAC classroom. Being exposed to these words and learning to use them independently is valuable with students who are dependent on others to meet their basic needs.

Helping your students communicate their wants is also a goal for many beginning communicators in a POWER: AAC classroom. On the students' IEPs, learning to communicate specific "wants" is typically reflected in any goal which includes choice making or making requests. Experience has taught us that starting with choice making and making requests is motivating and reinforcing for a beginning communicator or a student who is resistant to interaction through communication.

Historically, a focus on choice making tends to result in the use of very specific vocabulary, such as specific foods, toys, music, or activities. As the teacher, you present objects, photographs, or pictures for objects or activities which are motivating to the student and reinforces the student for communicating. Using choice making as a goal teaches the student how to make requests for things and activities that he wants.

In a POWER: AAC classroom, it is appropriate to provide a student with specific choices; however, it is hoped that the student's AAC system will provide him with more than the the names of things or activities. You can build in opportunities to communicate other wants by how you structure or engineer the choice making activity. These other ways teach the student how to mediate or manage an activity.

Imagine that a student has been given four choices: listening to music, reading a book, doing a puzzle, or doing something else. The student is given the option of "something else" as an "out" from the choices provided. In this example, the student is happy with one of the choices, and chooses "music," then, when given more choices, specifically asks to listen to a specific CD with a specific song. After listening to the song, the student is given the choice of listening to the song "again," listening to a "different" song, or "to stop" listening to music.

While the focus of the POWER: AAC modules has been on the use of core vocabulary, there is a place for choice making activities and choice boards in a POWER: AAC classroom. Robin Parker, at the October 3, 2012 PrAACtical AAC blog wrote, "choice boards help give a learner power, but under our guidelines and boundaries. With choice boards, a student learns more communication while having less power struggles or behavior challenges."

Using Robin Parker's idea that choice boards help give a learner power, but under our guidelines and boundaries, let's consider five guidelines and boundaries which are compatible with the practices of a POWER: AAC classroom.

First, making choices and requests with simple choice boards is a starting point for communicators who are at the earliest stages of learning to use an AAC system. It is not where we want to remain for an entire school year or after years and years of AAC intervention. As a starting point, the ability to make a choice between two symbols, objects, or photographs very likely indicates the ability to choose between almost any two symbols, objects or photographs in a meaningful context.

Second, while in this early stage of AAC intervention, provide multiple choice making opportunities throughout the day. Don't limit making requests to just snack or meal time. One teacher's goal was to

give no less than 50 choices per day to a student learning how to make choices and requests. She believed that it made her student happier when she was given this amount of autonomy and personal power. And, based on a 5 hour school day, it comes to about 10 choice making opportunities per hour.

Third, you are not really learning to make discerning choices if everything you are offered is acceptable. A part of learning choice making is the ability to discriminate between preferred and non-preferred choices; therefore, when giving a selection of choices, include some non-preferred or even negative choices. While it won't make the student happy to get a non-preferred or negative object, it is necessary to teach discrimination between choices.

Fourth, provide a way out when giving a selection of choices. It is the only way a student can tell you that she doesn't want any of the choices being offered. One teacher made a template for all of her choice boards which included a picture for "what I want is NOT on this board," and another picture for "I don't want anything." If the student choose "what I want is NOT on this board," the teacher either offered alternative choices or said she was sorry, but that those were the only choices available. If the student choose "I don't want anything," the teacher usually said "okay," unless the situation absolutely required that a choice be made.

This leads to guideline 5. Honor the choice or request made by the student, whenever possible. If the student picks a non-preferred choice, give her that choice. In the early stages of choice making and learning to make requests, students don't always pick the thing that we believe they really want. But, the student needs to learn that her choice matters and has consequences, which means you need to give her the item she requested rather than saying something like, "Do you really want that? I think you want this instead." If the student rejects the item or activity she choose, you can always give her another opportunity to make a new choice. But that new choice should only be offered after rejection of the previous choice.

In a POWER: AAC classroom, the goal is for students to have personal, AAC systems with core vocabulary. You might start with some choice boards, and have a variety of choice boards for your students, but in order to develop real language with your students, you need to transition from sole use of choice boards to core boards with supplemental choice boards.

Many teachers pair choice boards with a core board. They use a core board to model and talk to the student.

Then they offer the student the choice board for him to make his request.

To mediate the activity, like to ask for “more,” something “different” or to “stop,” they use the core board with the student.

One tip from a teacher is to make your choice boards and core board the same size. Insert them back-to-back into a page protector so that you can just flip it over to go from requesting to core words.

You can also post choice boards in key locations throughout the school. Post lunch choices in the lunch room. Post sensory activity choices throughout the sensory room. Post PE equipment options and actions in the gymnasium. One school made a wooden display on their playground with a plexi-glass case into which they could insert a display of different activities from which the students could choose. The display was protected from the elements, but could be easily changed and updated, as needed. They also included photos of staff members and students so that the students could do more than just choose what they wanted to do. They could choose with whom they wanted to play.

For practical steps in developing an outdoor communication display, check out an article by Christine Derse entitled Accessible Picture Communication on the Playground in the *SIG 12 Perspectives on Augmentative and Alternative Communication* from December 2008.

To transition to primary use of a core board, teachers design manual communication displays with a section for choices and other extended vocabulary. The type of design you use depends on many variables. The goal is to have the choice options as quickly and easily accessible as possible for the short times and various places in which they are needed. The design needs to allow for flexibility in the choices provided as the student’s interests, options, and preferences change.

That leads us to a final thought about expanding requesting and choice making options. Teachers and families often say, “my student or child is only motivated by food and eating. What can we do to build more requesting and choice making?”

To go beyond choosing food, or other highly preferred objects, and to increase choice making opportunities, try using **people** as a motivational choice. Choosing a person requires a choice board with their names and photographs. Choosing **places** is another option for increasing choice making opportunities.

You can build more opportunities to make choices by providing control over schedules and other **time** choices. Controlling **when** you do something can be a very motivating way to make choices. And finally,

different **conditions** are always options for making requests and choices. Deciding **how** you do something brings variety to everyday activities.

The examples on these last 2 slides show practical ways to make choices about people, places, times, and conditions.

In the scenarios provided, there were examples of different ways in which students could make their choices or requests. Sometimes, the choices need to be provided on a choice board. Sometimes, the choices might be core words on the students' core board. Sometimes the students could make choices from personalized noun vocabulary added to their core boards. And other times, the students make choices by answering yes/no questions.

Making choice boards involves an investment in time. As an alternative to making choice boards, or for those instances when you just don't have a choice board available, use core words to describe the choices. Aim for core words that describe an attribute or action of the choice. If you have no core word available to describe an attribute or action of the choice, use a color word as a back-up option. It is still describing an attribute and has value.

Imagine that you are giving students the option of making a peanut butter and banana sandwich, or a s'more, or any other combination of the available ingredients. Instead of making a display with the pictures for bread, peanut butter, banana, cracker, chocolate, or marshmallow fluff; pair the ingredients with a core word and use the core word to make the request. If you ask for the "long" thing, you are asking for the banana. If you request the "break" thing, you get to break a piece of a chocolate bar and add it to your s'more. Not only is this a practical strategy for teachers, it is also a way for students to make requests for things which are NOT specifically presented to them on a choice board. This is an important strategic skill.

To help students make the association between objects and descriptive concepts based on how things feel or look, you might need to add a tactile element to your symbols as a teaching strategy. This is what teachers typically do for students with visual challenges. They can feel the real object, then feel the symbol to associate the object with the symbol. In the examples shown here, the Pixon pictures are being used, but this type of support would be the same with any of the representational systems available.

A second strategic skill is spelling. For students with emerging phonics and spelling skills, the use of alphabet letters is another way to indicate choices. Introduce each choice, focusing on the initial sound,

like P (puh) for pizza, T (tah) for taco, and S (ssss) for soup. As you name each choice, present the letter P, T, and S. Teachers have used this approach, utilizing lower case magnetic letters that can be presented on a magnetic surface.

Another option for students who have more developed literacy skills would be to circle the letters P, T and S on an alphabet board as you offer the choices. In both of these examples, to make his choice, the student needs to remember the food that is associated with that letter since there is no picture of the food presented.

Another option might be to use numbers to reflect the choice. Pizza would be the number 1 choice, taco the number 2 choice, and soup the number 3 choice. Using numbers, the student needs to remember the object associated with his first, second, and third choice.

To help your students move beyond wants and needs communication, build in opportunities for them to use their AAC systems for information transfer, social closeness, and social etiquette. These three purposes of communication are more in the realm of conversational development. Before we delve into these areas of using AAC in the classroom, let's consider the notion of conversation vs. skill development.

As you work on socially-driven communication skills in your classroom, you want the students to be excited about communicating and be confident that whatever they say will be respected and heard. Share in the students' enthusiasm for communicating. Don't squash their willingness to communicate by turning every conversation into a language drill. Sometimes, your focus needs to be on figuring out what the student is trying to tell you, not on completeness and correctness of language. To indirectly support better language, recast or expand what the student said using modeling, but do not require the student to repeat what he is trying to say until he gets it right. As a general rule of thumb, support the students' willingness to communicate. Be cautious that you don't overly criticize and correct their communication attempts.

However, that doesn't mean that you can't come back at a later time and use the information the student told you as the basis for a student-focused language lesson. Use the topic initiated by the student to role play a conversational dialog. Practice new vocabulary and new language structures. You are doing this later so that if the student wants to have the same chat with someone else, he can be more clear, complete, and correct.

One way for your student's to develop socially-driven communication skills is through information transfer.

Information transfer is about conveying information from one person to another. For our purposes, the student in the POWER: AAC classroom is person A who needs to learn how to tell things to person B.

On February 2, 2013, Carole Zangari wrote the following at the PrAACticalAAC blog. "A big reason that we express ourselves is to share information..... It may not seem like a high priority until we realize how often we need to do this to function in our daily lives."

Four starting points for helping student share information is to teach them how to relay information, to report problems, to direct others, and to tell personal narratives. Each of these four starting points could, but not always, begin by having the student learn how to say, "I have something to tell you" as a way for the student to initiate the information transfer. It gets the attention of the communication partner and sets the context for what the student is going to say next.

Depending on the student's abilities, the AAC system, and any number of other variables, you might pre-program or pre-record the sentence "I have something to tell you" in the student's AAC device or app. Or you could record it in a single message device which is consistently available to the student. If you are using low tech systems, you could write the sentence, "I have something to tell you" in 1 space on the manual communication board, or if you have students who use various types of remove-able symbols, you could have it written on a card for the student to hand to the other person.

The student could also initiate the information sharing by building the sentence word-by-word or even say just the key words. This would require that the student at least have the word "tell" on his AAC system.

One student named Jonathan uses an AAC device with two-switch auditory scanning. Jonathan is learning to build language, word-by-word, with his core vocabulary, but it takes him a long time to do it and he makes frequent mistakes and often accidentally erases what he just said. So, when it is his turn to relay information, he always decides what he wants to say and builds his message word-by-word, but he delivers the message by having someone record what he said in a single message device. That way, he gets to use his own words in a timely and accurate way.

This story is your reminder that one student might use more than one strategy to relay information to others.

I'm sure you can think of many opportunities for your students to relay information. These are the things that you relay which are not stories or answers during class lessons, but short, concise information that is part of every day interaction. At school, they can bring messages to the office or to another teacher or therapist. They could be called upon as the person to make announcements that day in class. One of the most important ways for students to relay information is for the student to learn how to relay information from home to school and definitely from school to home. A good example of relaying information during instruction is through sharing of opinions. Students can be encouraged to express opinions like "I like it," "I don't like it," "that's good," or "that's bad."

Teachers of students in POWER: AAC classrooms have written do-able goals for their students with significant disabilities that have helped these students learn about relaying information to others. By including these goals on their student's IEPs, they have found practical ways for them to be working on more than requesting and choice making. Obviously, since students in classrooms have different skill levels with their AAC systems, the goals reflect the level of ability of each student to relay information.

What kind of messages could your students deliver? The goal is for the student to relay information, but they do not necessarily need to relay details. Let me explain. Imagine that the student is going to relay attendance information to the office. The teacher fills out a form with the names of the students who are present and absent. The student, with the form in-hand, goes to the office and says, "I have something to tell you." Then says either the very generic message, "this is for you," or the more specific message, "This says who is out today."

In one POWER: AAC classroom, lunch was delivered to their classroom, so any student eating the school lunch needed to place their lunch order. Every morning, as a class, they reviewed the menu choices and completed their lunch order. One student would take their lunch order to the office and, once again, say "I have something to tell you," and then give a generic message or give a more specific message, with varying levels of specificity.

Another way to relay information is to make announcements. Many POWER: AAC classroom teachers include announcements in their morning meeting time. Students take turns throughout the week or month in making classroom announcements.

A natural way to relay information is for the student to be the messenger of information between home and school. Many teachers and families regularly communicate with a home-school book or planner. POWER: AAC teachers and instructional assistants may greet the student in the morning. One teacher

made tags for the backpacks used by her students. When the student had something special which they were bringing to school, the parent removed the tag from the backpack and attached it to the student's clothing. That way, the teacher or instructional assistant was visually alerted. So, before opening up and immediately checking in the backpack, book, or planner and discovering what's in there, the teacher or instructional assistant waits and prompts the student to say, "I have something to tell you" or "I have something from home. Look in the book."

For communicating back to the parents, most teachers write something in their student's home-school books. Help the parent learn how to prompt their child to say "I have something to tell you," followed by a message to encourage them to look in the book. Give the student a way out by giving them the option of saying that nothing special happened at school that day.

For students who are learning how to build messages word-by-word, send home symbolized text which the student and parent can use together. This example was made by the speech-language pathologist for a student who uses Unity®84 in an Accent. As a project with the entire class, the speech-language pathologist did a cooking activity and quickly made and printed out symbolized text to send home with the student in his home-school book. This example shows the parents the codes they need to model with the device and a simple dialog they can use to have an after-school chat with their child.

Creating a personalized, symbolized dialog for a daily activity requires time and resources, such as the software to quickly create and print out the symbolized text.

As an alternative to sending home daily, personalized, symbolized text, teachers may create a School Day Report Form which they can send home everyday with their child. This form was created by a teacher for students in her class using the Unity84 program. Similar forms were created for other students using different AAC devices and symbols. She created a form to report on how the child interacted in group, completed school work, got nutrition and hydration, and, most importantly, communicated with others. All the teacher has to do is put the student's name and date on the top of the form, and tick off the boxes that match how the student participated that day in her class. When the child gets home, the parent can ask them to tell about their day, then use the form to help model and prompt use of the AAC system.

Having a display or list of names of friends and family members, with their photographs, can provide a great incentive for students to talk about their classmates, neighborhood friends, and family members. When identifying the person, list their name and, if possible, their relationship to the student. For

example, for a young girl named Madison, her list of important family members included her immediate family and other relatives. By stating the relationship, more unfamiliar communication partners have additional information. Imagine a student coming to class on Monday and saying “she come” and then pointing at a favorite family member who lives in another city. That student used core vocabulary to relay information and then the photo of the family member to add specificity to the message. This provides the framework to extend the conversation to talk about if this family member is coming or already came for a visit, or if you are hoping she will come.

In reverse, imagine the student going home and telling mom, “he bad” and then pointing at a photograph of a classmate. That opens up the opportunity to talk about that classmate. Did he feel bad, did something bad happen to him, or did he do something bad?

The second starting point for learning how to transfer information is to help students learn how to report a problem.

If a student can report a problem, it may reduce or prevent behavioral outbursts. Opportunities in a POWER: AAC classroom could include helping students learn how to tell others when they are being stressed, to request help, or to report when something is broken.

Let’s consider Daniel and how this is reflected on his IEP.

Daniel is a high school student with autism and he has goals on his IEP which are geared to helping him tell people about things that are stressing him. He has a multi-modal AAC system which includes an iPad with a communication app, along with cards which he can hand to his communication partner. His cards are attached to the case of his iPad. He also has additional copies of his cards at his work station and at various locations in his classroom. It was decided that Daniel would use his cards as his primary AAC strategy for communicating about his stressors. The vocabulary is also programmed in his communication app. When stressed, his cards are his preferred communication strategy.

For Daniel to learn how to use these cards, his teachers developed social stories. They also monitored him regularly, capturing the moments for him to use his cards before he had an outburst.

A very common goal for many students in a POWER: AAC classroom is learning how to ask for help. Daniel has the vocabulary in his device, in both word form and sentence form, to tell people when he needs help. Because there are so many situations in which he might need help, his sentences are very generic. However, his team is making sure that he is learning a variety of core words for him to be more

specific regarding the type of help he might need. For example, he might need help getting something, putting something away, finding something, or turning something on or off. Therefore, during teaching opportunities, they model and encourage the use of verb phrases, like “get out” “put away,” “take off,” and “turn on.”

Daniel’s IEP goals include specific goals for learning how to request help. He has a goal for communicating the general idea of “help,” which he can do with his iPad or his communication cards. However, once he makes his request for help, his communication partner encourages him to be more specific, using his iPad to say verbs to direct the action of the partner to maybe open something, or get something, or find something. The communication partner will model the possible action words, based on the context of the situation. For example, if they are cooking and Daniel is supposed to open a jar, but can’t do it, the partner can model, “you need help opening this.”

Daniel is also learning how to report when things are not right or broken. Just like with learning how to ask for help, Daniel has the vocabulary in his device, in both word form and sentence form, to tell people when things are not right, something is broken, or he needs someone to fix something. His team has made sure he knows how to report broken stuff using core words, once again by modeling these words and phrases. He also has pre-stored sentences as an option, but Daniel generally generates his own language, saying things like, “this not right, or “it broken,” or “I want you fix,” or “I need different one.”

Daniel’s IEP goals show a routine for how he is to report problems or broken stuff. They needed to have a specific plan for what to do if his iPad was not working correctly.

One day, the zipper on his lunch bag was stuck. He said, “I have problem,” and handed his lunch bag to his instructional assistant. She immediately saw that the zipper was stuck, and took the opportunity to model, “get it open” while saying, “Don’t worry, I will get it open.” He then responded by saying, on his iPad, “open it.”

The third starting point for learning how to transfer information is to help students learn how to direct others.

The more that a person who uses AAC is able to direct others, the more likely that he or she will have better personal care. Opportunities in a POWER: AAC classroom might be for the students to direct people as to where to find things or where to put things away for them. Another opportunity would be for them to provide directions in how they want people to do things for them.

Ashley is a middle-school student with cerebral palsy who uses a device with eye gaze. She is very dependent on other people for managing all of her stuff. She has a tendency to be passive, and her family wants to prepare her for a safe and happy adult-life by teaching her how to direct her personal care. You can see how Ashley's IEP reflects the communication skills she will need to develop in order to direct her future caregivers.

For recreation, Ashley enjoys using her eye gaze device to control games and music on a computer. But to do that, she needs her communication partner to set her up and make sure everything is ready for her. Her IEP reflects the communication skills needed to provide directions to others. Her directions reflect her level of understanding of computers, not her communication partners. All her messages are pre-stored sentences because the sequence of steps is predictable.

Here you see another goal for Ashley where the steps for giving directions are not as predictable. She is learning how to tell people, word-by-word, how to properly help her with her lunch or snack. In this case, she uses single words. Although Ashley can build phrases and sentences, during eating, using a single word was deemed adequate because of the time it takes her to communicate. The words listed are options and Ashley does not need to say each word. She only needs to say whichever single word provides her helper with the required direction. However, if Ashley does NOT direct her helper, her helper will model each of the options for Ashley.

Her helper starts out by reviewing each of the available snack or lunch options and Ashley tells her how much to put on her plate. While eating, Ashley informs her helper when she is ready for a bite or to wait if she is still chewing. As they are eating, Ashley will give her helper feedback as to the size of the bites and the speed at which she is being fed. Finally, Ashley controls when she is done eating.

The fourth starting point for learning how to transfer information is to help students tell personal narratives. This is the most sophisticated of the four starting points.

Narrative development has been widely researched and discussed in the field of AAC. If the idea of narrative development is new to you, check out some of the journal articles listed on this slide.

If blog postings are more your style, the following postings at the PrAACticalAAC blog are a great starting point.

Basically, a narrative is like a short story. We all tell narratives, many which are about the events of our lives.

Imagine it's Friday morning and three students have come into your classroom. Robin comes in first from the bus, all upset. Her teacher asks her, "What's wrong?" and Robin, using her AAC device says, "boy bad." The teacher asks, "which boy?" and Robin names "Michael." Then the teacher asks, "What did Michael do?" and Robin says, "take water." That's a narrative.

Next Joshua, who uses an eye gaze system, comes in with his mom who says that she is going to be picking him up early that afternoon. When the teacher asks Joshua why his mom is picking him up early, he says, "go roller coaster six times." then adds , "tonight" and "go fast yell loud." He has plans and is excited to tell her about it. That's a narrative.

Then Jaden comes in and using his manual communication board, says "look" and "book." When the teacher looks in his home-school book, she find a photograph of him as a baby. He says, "me" "little" and "outside." That's a narrative.

Robin, Joshua, and Jaden are learning to tell stories about their lives. Robin told about a recent event, Joshua told about a future event, and Jaden told about a past event.

When telling a personal narrative, it is helpful to have something tangible and visible to help recall the event. Those tangibles might include an actual object, like a toy car; a remnant, such as a food wrapper; a photograph, like the photo of Jaden as a baby; or a symbol from the student's symbol set. The hope is that the tangible reminder will stimulate the student to share information.

Other visual supports, in the form of symbolized text, help the student relate the key points of the narrative.

For many students with significant challenges, the communication partner will still need to ask questions to draw out information from the student.

First off, avoid asking /wh/ questions that require specific words that are not available in the student's AAC system. In our example, an empty french fries wrapper puts you in the context of the conversation. So, the teacher does not ask, "Where did you go?" Instead, she confirms that the student went to McDonalds by asking a yes-no question. Then she ask questions that CAN be answered with the student's available vocabulary, especially the core vocabulary.

While engaged in conversation and sharing information, model additional core vocabulary by making comments and asking for more information. Your modeled comments might result in the student either repeating some part of what you said or adding more information.

As a final aspect of information transfer, you can help the student tell someone else about his experience. As the teacher or therapist, you've gotten the information from the student and have hopefully been able to put that information into a simple narrative. To reinforce use of that narrative, record it in a digital voice output device, like a Step-by-Step® or BIGmack® Switch. Have the student tell someone else about his experience by re-playing the recorded narrative. The student will have had the opportunity of generating his ideas and information with core vocabulary, but also the power of recorded sentences to tell his personal narrative to someone else in an efficient and error-free way.

On the student's IEP, you may have goals for telling about a recent event that happened at home or about an event that happened at school. Jaden's goal for telling about a recent family event includes having the family utilizing some type of tangible visual support. His goal for telling his family about a school event includes both a tangible visual support and symbolized text.

Jaden's goals for telling about a future event are similar, but with slightly less expectations on his part since he has not yet experienced the event. The visual supports used at school prepare him for the upcoming event. For example, his class was planning a field trip to a cheese factory, so the teacher brought in different cheeses to smell and taste then they wrote about the smells and taste of cheese.

Here is an example of the writing which the students did after experiencing the different cheeses. The teacher includes a photo of the student smelling the cheese, and then the student adds symbolized text to the page. The target word for this language activity is the word "smell."

Finally, to help Jaden develop his personal narrative skills, he has "tell about" goals. At their weekly "show & tell" activity, Jaden tells about something which he brought with him to school. Based on information written in the home-school book, the teacher can ask the appropriate questions to draw information from Jaden, as necessary.

At morning meeting time, his teacher has "family news time" where students get to share about their families. The teacher reviews information written in their home-school books and then asks probing questions, like "how is your mom?" or "what is happening with your brother?"

We have covered four starting points for information transfer. Let's move on to the third purpose to communicate, as proposed by Light, which is to develop social closeness. This purpose emphasizes using communication to establish and maintain relationships with others. Just like information transfer, communication for social closeness is a social communication skill.

For some students, this goal may be challenging if they have a difficult time interacting socially with others. The students which come to mind for whom this is true are those students with autism spectrum disorders.

On May 6, 2013, at the PrAACticalAAC blog, guest author Dr. Erinn Finke made the following comment: “There is a pervasive myth that children with autism spectrum disorders (ASD) are not interested in social interaction and prefer to be alone in their own worlds, separate from other people. But many of you who have worked with children with ASD know this is not true. In fact, many (if not all) of the children with ASD I have worked with wanted to be liked, have friends, and be included in social activities. However, many of them lacked the innate ability to make this desire a reality.”

Learning to communicate to maintain and establish interaction with others is a step in the right direction in building social closeness, through communication, a reality for all students in a POWER: AAC classroom.

Communicating to establish and maintain relationships starts by creating situations that **draw our students into interaction with others**. You can't force a person to interact, but we are all more likely to enjoy being with others when we are with preferred people or with others who share our interests. The same is true for students in a POWER: AAC classroom. Students can start learning to interact when they are paired with preferred people or allowed to engage with someone who has a shared interest.

In addition, small group projects, like creating a collage where students are assigned roles such as picture locator, picture cutter, and picture gluer, help students focus on a task and interact to complete it. Students are also drawn to interact with team activities, like tapping a balloon around in the air and counting the number of taps before it falls to the ground.

As a quick brain storming activity, list 2 group projects which would draw your students into interacting. Then list 2 team activities which are physically possible for your students. These could be projects and activities which you could try today in your POWER: AAC classroom.

The next step in the process of using communication for social closeness is to enter into an interaction.

Imagine that you went by yourself to a regional conference. It's break time and you see a group of people having a lively discussion. You are drawn to them because you recognize one of the people. So you approach them and hopefully, you do more than just stand there and stare at them. To develop social closeness through communication, you greet them and ask if you can join the group. As the

people introduce themselves, you respond by saying something like, "it's nice to meet you." On the other hand, someone might approach you and you need to respond to her. Maybe someone in the group sees you standing near by and takes the initiative, asking, "would you like to join us?" Given the invitation, you respond and say, "yes, thank you."

In either situation, you have now entered the interaction.

Now, put yourself in your student's shoes. Imagine that a visitor has come into the classroom and you are curious about her. How do you greet the person? You probably say, "hello" and maybe introduce yourself. Then you ask the visitor to tell you her name.

Now imagine that it is free time and you want to play a game with someone. How do you ask someone to play a game with you? What do you say? What words do you need in your AAC system? What do you say if you want to join others who are already playing a game?

Finally, you are doing an art project and you can't do it by yourself. However, your teacher has invited peer helpers from another classroom to help you. How do you get someone to work with you? Maybe you walk or roll over to someone, or you give someone eye contact and vocalize. Then you say, "can you help me?" or "help me, please." There is the possibility that the helper might say "no," and then you have to respond appropriately. We would probably either say, "ok" and move on to someone else, or ask "why not?"

For your students to start using communication for social closeness, make sure they have access to personal information, like their name. They also need meet and greet vocabulary. Every student should be able to say, "My name is" and ask someone "What is your name?"

To teach your students how to approach others and respond to others can be done through role playing activities and through the development of social scripts. There are many social skills curriculae on the market which you can use to help organize your instructional activities.

Favorite starting points in developing communication skills for social closeness involve learning how to say hello and goodbye; practicing meeting new people; learning how to invite someone to share, play, or help you; practicing being a good sport during group activities, and learning how to give compliments.

Finally, how do we use communication to maintain interaction with others. To maintain interaction, a student needs to be actively participating through communication. The student can not be a passive observer. Being active involves engagement with others, as you take turns saying stuff, or you ask the

other person questions that is focused on the partner, not yourself and your needs. It seems so obvious, but it is important to remember that the key to turn taking is that the turn goes back and forth between you and the communication partner.

Carolyn Musselwhite, Linda Burkhardt, and others have promoted the idea of social scripting as one strategy to promote social closeness with communication. They have outlined what they call "*An Anatomy of a Conversation*," with many examples of phrases and sentences that you could store in an AAC device to teach a beginning communicator the reasons for talking and the roles they play in the conversational dance. The stage is set to draw the student into the interaction when the student is paired with a preferred partner who has a shared interest; or invited to participate in a group project or team activity.

The student enters into the interaction when he says something that gets the attention of the communication partner, then uses a conversational starter.

The interaction is maintained when the student interjects comments, encourages the person to keep talking, asks for clarification, and asks questions to shift the turn to the other person. This continues until the time comes when the student is done talking.

Musselwhite, Burkhardt and others have emphasized the use of recorded or pre-stored phrases and sentences in the beginning stages of learning how to engage in communication for social closeness.

A variety of visual supports and educational scaffolds are used when developing and implementing conversational scripts. Once a script is written, some POWER: AAC teachers create flips cards for each exchange in the conversation. Other teachers create a visual chart of the conversational exchange. The example on this slide shows a script for watching TV at home. It provides a way for the parents to engage with their child in a conversation while watching TV together.

One teacher used color-coding in all her visual supports, using YELLOW to color code whatever the student was supposed to say and ORANGE for the communication partner.

In one middle school, the teacher was helping her students learn how to take their turn in a script by using a turn exchange signal. She was using a "talking stick" which they passed to their communication partner after completing their turn. She was hoping to fade that to a picture of the stick, then to a gesture or an auditory signal until looking at the other person and being quiet was the only signal needed that the student had completed her turn.

This teacher's plan is a good reminder that visual supports and scaffolds are essential when building skills, but need to be reduced or faded away as the student develops proficiency.

When initially using scripts, both the student and the communication partner are learning to say their lines. However, to prevent the student from rote execution of the script and to prepare them for the real world, build flexibility in your scripts. The student needs to learn to listen to the communication partner and adjust his response. One strategy is to write 2 to 5 versions of each script. Each person still has a set "line," but the routine or pattern is slightly altered. Another strategy is to build in optional lines. In the example shown, the script is for a high school student to talk about what someone is going to wear the next day. Her responses to whatever her friend says includes a positive comment, negative comment, and neutral comment. One student had learned a "morning greeting" script which always included asking someone, "how are you today" followed by "that's good." One day, he greeted a teacher with the usual, "how are you today?" and he said, "Terrible. I had a car accident on my way to school today." When he replied with, "that's good," his teacher decided it was time to introduce alternative responses.

In the real world, communication partners are going to respond in unexpected ways. Sometimes, when approached for a conversation, the partner will indicate that she doesn't have time to talk right now, or they don't want to be bothered. Prepare for the unexpected by including "exit" messages, such as "When is a good time for you?" or "Sorry about bothering you." Don't forget to role play a variety of unexpected partner responses.

As the student has more and more experience with pre-recorded social scripts in scripted conversations, begin to de-construct some of the suggested phrases and sentences into their core vocabulary component parts. This slide shows a visual support material that is the "script" for an exchange where, potentially, the student is learning to tell someone about something. Row 2 is left blank in order to add whatever words are needed for the details of the conversation. It is the place to add topic-specific vocabulary. This board could possibly be used as a conversation board, but in doing that, the student will not be learning use of the motor plan for selecting the core vocabulary. Rather, this board is a visual support for the flow of the conversation and the possible words the student could say.

The words on this board provide the opportunity for the student to greet, start the conversation, maintain the conversation, repair any miscommunication, shift the conversation to the communication partner, and finally close out the conversation.

As an application activity, develop a script of one student based on one of these topics listed. Create a visual support for the script that can be used with the student.

The fourth purpose of communication, as identified by Light, is for social etiquette. And like information transfer and social closeness, it is fundamentally a social communication skill.

Many parents want their children to communicate and interact with others in polite and socially appropriate ways. To do that, they need access to social etiquette words, like hello, goodbye, please, thank you, excuse me, and sorry. Students in a POWER: AAC classroom might communicate those concepts with symbols on an AAC system, through vocalization, or via gestures or manual signs. However, be cautious about requiring a student to always say “please” when making a request as there are other valuable things to work on in terms of communication for social etiquette.

One of those valuable things to work on involves the art of negotiation. Many beginning communicators in a POWER: AAC classroom need to learn how to negotiate transitions, changes, disappointments, and anything else that might trigger an emotional outburst or behavioral challenge. Core words can be very effective to deal with negotiation of issues related to time, actions, and condition.

Effective strategies for learning how to communicate for social etiquette includes the use of choice boards. In deciding on a daily work plan, the student could negotiate choices about who to work with, what work he wants to do, where he wants to work, or when he wants to do the work. If those choices are available to the student, he can negotiate his work plan. Polite behaviors can also be taught through social scripting and role playing. Learning how to interrupt, to say “excuse me,” to ask for forgiveness, or to ask permission are all good social etiquette behaviors which work well with social scripting because they are quite predictable. Write out an appropriate script and role-play the real life situations.

In this module, you learned about how to use AAC in your classroom for these four purposes of communication. By implementing the ideas and strategies from this module, you will be helping your students develop the communication skills they need to interact at school, at home, and in their communities.

Please complete the post-test for this module. Thank you.

