AAC and the Power of Peers

Don’t Underestimate the Power of Peers!

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How We Got Here

- History of our AAC Support Team
Input
Spoken Language

Child Learning Aided Symbols

Output
Spoken Language Development

Spoken Language

Aided Language
The goal is to create an environment where there is a balance in the modes of communication for input and what the child is currently using.
Aided/Focused Language Stimulation (Elder & Goossens 1994)

- Communication Strategy
- Modeling language by combining our spoken language (verbal output) with an AAC system (aided language)
- If we want someone to use AAC, we need to speak AAC.

Tell me and I will forget
Show me and I will remember
Involve me and I will understand forever

~Confucius
The POWER of Peers in AAC

Peers are natural communication partners.

Researchers have found that peer-mediated interventions for students with disabilities can positively impact communication outcomes (Fisher and Shogren 2012).
Benefits of Involving Peers in AAC Implementation: (Fisher and Shogren 2012)

- Peers support the development of communication skills
- Peers shape the AAC users' sense of belonging
- They influence the users' feelings of self and safety
- Peers foster critical thinking skills
Autonomy vs Independence
Linda Burkhart (PODD 3 day training, 2013)

- Autonomous communication is much more than making choices and is not necessarily independent.
- It is more important to have autonomous communication and then work toward independence.
- Peers can encourage autonomy and give social value to language.
Facts about Peer Training

● There is *minimal research* and support providing a formal curriculum for peer training
● Similar to AAC user training, peer training is best achieved when *individualized* to the specific needs of each peer
● Peers almost always respond well to *constructive feedback*
● Peers should *not* be required to collect data
Peer Training Model
(Kent-Walsh & McNaughton 2005)

**Step 1: Pretest and Instructional Program**
Team can assess peers understanding of AAC and communication in general. This is where peers indicate willingness to participate.

**Step 2: Strategy Description, Demonstration, and Modeling**
The strategy is then described to the peer. After description of the components of the strategy, the teacher or therapist demonstrates the strategy without the AAC user. After the demonstration, the teacher or therapist then models the strategy with the AAC user so the peer can see how the strategy in action.

**Step 3: Verbal Practice of Strategy Steps**
The peer and teacher/therapist then verbally practice the strategy. The peer is provided feedback or additional instruction, demonstration, and modeling.
Peer Training Model cont...
(Kent-Walsh & McNaughton 2005)

**Step 4: Advanced Practice and Feedback**
The peer is then given the opportunity to practice with the AAC user. The teacher/therapist is present for his practice session and provides feedback after the conclusion of the interaction. It is best to not interrupt the interaction and wait until the interaction is completed prior to giving feedback.

**Step 5: Post-Test, Long-Term Commitment, and Generalization**
At the conclusion of the advanced practice and feedback, the peer is assessed for their understanding. They also commit to use the strategy or technique for the long-term when interacting with the AAC user. At the conclusion of these steps the teacher/therapist looks at opportunities for generalization of the strategy (e.g., in other general education settings or during extracurricular activities.)
When coaching peers to work with students who use AAC, tell them LAF, don’t CRY!

The LAF don’t CRY strategy teaches peers how to enhance their interactions with AAC users.

Created by the AAC Mentor Project Team @ Penn State University
| L | **Listen** and Communicate Respect | • Did I read the message carefully before I responded?  
• Did I show that I care? |
| A | **Ask** Questions | • Did I get enough info to understand what my partner is telling me?  
• Did I ask good questions? |
<p>| F | <strong>Focus</strong> on what your partner is saying | • Did my response show that I am thinking about: 1) What my partner is saying and 2) How my partner is feeling? |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>C</th>
<th>Don’t <strong>Criticize</strong></th>
<th>• Did I remember NOT to criticize or judge my partner?</th>
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| R | Don’t **React** too Quickly | • Did I give careful thought to what I was saying to my partner?  
• Did I think about the impact of what I was saying? |
| Y | Don’t **Yakkity Yak** | • Did I allow my partner the chance to talk? |
Our Plan in Caledonia...

- Use of LINKS elective and Peer-to-Peer to recruit and integrate our model
- Flowchart of our process
- Year-to-Year Transitions
Download this presentation with LiveBinder:

http://www.livebinders.com/play/play/1069463
References


