What do all those letters mean?

- AAC - augmentative and alternative communication
- CCN - complex communication needs
- VOCA - voice output communication aids
- VOC - voice output communication
- VOD - voice output device
- SGD - speech generating devices
- PWJAAC - People who use AAC
- AWJAAC - Adults who use AAC
- SWJAAC/CWJAAC - Students who use AAC/Children who use AAC
- Low, mid and high tech
Evaluation

- Purpose:
  - Select, develop, modify AT systems
  - Create or adjust instructional plans
  - Measure progress
- The Law:
  - Highly qualified
  - Completed in a timely manner
  - Connection to IEP goals/TEKS/STAAR
  - Timely acquisition of tools

Evaluation

- Develop an Evaluation Plan (DATE)
- Standardized and Norm Referenced tools- usually not sufficient but use what you can
- Establish receptive language skills, establish expressive language skills, and fill in the gap
- Explore existing and potential literacy skills
- Collect data in multiple environments with input from multiple team members
- Explore total communication: voice, oral speech, low tech, high tech, sign, written language, etc.
- Identify required tool features, trial tools, collect data, adjust as needed

Core Vocabulary

- Core vocabulary consists of the most frequently used words we speak and write- established by age 2-3
- About 80% of what we say is comprised of about the same 300 words- across age levels, gender, culture, etc.
- In order to communicate, access to core vocabulary in single word units is required (i.e. not programmed as full sentences)
- Most of these words are pronouns, prepositions, demonstratives, common verbs, common adjectives, common adverbs and a few common nouns
- If intervention time is invested in teaching, modeling and reinforcing core vocabulary, communicators will be able to say most of what they need to say
Core Vocabulary

- The other words are fringe, content/context specific, and academic vocabulary items.
- Non-core vocabulary is less frequently used, but is often germane to the interaction.
- Absolutely teach/model core vocabulary first and often.
- The communicator gets a huge benefit from being able to say 80% of what they intend.
- Concurrently enable/teach/model access to fringe/context specific vocabulary.
- Low tech may be the best way to provide non-core vocabulary.

What is expected from the tool, the child, the staff and the environment?

**PARTICIPATION**
- Press and play
- Allows students to engage in an activity.
- Circle time
- Scripted activities
- “tell me”, “show me”
- Often utilizes only content or context specific vocabulary.

**COMMUNICATION**
- Low and high tech
- Involves the use of core vocabulary.
- May involve the use of fringe, content/context specific, and academic vocabulary.
- Sharing of basic needs/wants AND novel utterances (thoughts, feelings, opinions).

Promising Practices

WHAT SUCCESSFUL SCHOOL DISTRICTS DO WITH SWUAC
Establish relationships between the staff, student, and family

- Invite all stakeholders to ensure support and buy in for the technology used
  - From the beginning
  - Listen to all input during the assessment process
  - Involve all team members in the implementation plan
- Meet them (staff, students, and parents) where they are
  - Staff may have no or varying levels of AAC knowledge
  - Parents may have no information, misinformation, preconceived ideas, be in varied stages of grief about their child's disability, etc.
  - Student may have ideas and expectations.
- What is the cognitive, communicative, and academic load being placed on the student?

Provide Professional Development

- Create district, campus, and individual level PD plans that span 1, 3, and 5 years
- Implement the plans
- Follow up and provide feedback on plan effectiveness, and revise accordingly
- Resources for PD
  - Face-to-face, text-based tutorials, and online
  - Vendors
  - Education Service Centers
  - District created
  - YouTube (really)
  - Books groups and self study
  - Mentoring and job-embedded coaching
    - Develop a formal plan
    - Reward the mentors

Develop an Implementation Plan

- Include expected outcomes, person(s) responsible, and timelines for completion
- Start small and gradually add targets; utilize the Objective Opportunity Chart
- Tie objectives to IEP/TEKS/PLAAPP/Daily lesson plans
- Identify and target areas of intervention focusing on Janice Light's 4 areas of communicative competence
  - Operational
  - Linguistic
  - Social
  - Strategic
- Collect data on a regular basis and use results to guide intervention
- Consider transition issues (from class to class, year to year, school to school, school to vocational/Post HS)
Focus on Total Communication

- Utilize every and all modalities of engagement and communication—voice, facial expression, gesture, sign, low tech, high tech, written/text-based, etc.
- Provide clear expectations to staff and to student
- Always have access to the tools required for the task
- Low tech boards available, visible and in use
- Decide as a team what will be “accepted” as a communication and be consistent
- Share successes and challenges in the classroom and home environment on a regular basis

Top 10 AAC Implementation Strategies

IN NO PARTICULAR ORDER

10. Direct Instruction

- Teach operational and linguistic competence
- Teach picture meanings in a language approach
- Teach picture locations in a motor-based approach
- Practice access strategies and endurance
- Teach pragmatic skills
- Teach language constructs—grammar, morphology, syntax, semantics, literacy, academic vocabulary and applications
- Address language disorders
- Many manufacturers provide ready made materials for these lessons
9. Environmental Instruction
- Teach linguistic, operational, social, and strategic competence
- Look for highly motivating items and activities
- Support the use of natural linguistic cues
  - Not “Tell me blue”
  - Instead “What color is this?” or “Is this blue or red?”
- Utilize peers (especially non-challenged peers), and siblings
- Utilize low-tech to support academic and content specific vocabulary
- Practice similar vocabulary targets (core) across multiple environments with a variety of communication partners
- Support the development of pragmatic language skills

8. Routines and Scripts
- Teach linguistic and operational competence
- Identify predictable vocabulary scenarios, or classroom activities that use the same context specific vocabulary (i.e. Circle time or Snack)
- Model the expected communication behaviors
- Provide multiple opportunities for the student to demonstrate expected behaviors
- Be consistent with rewards and consequences

7. Language Intervention
- Teach linguistic and social competence
- Utilize established expressive and receptive language support strategies (i.e. “regular language therapy”)
- Utilize imitation, parallel, extension language techniques
- Model the intended communication behaviors with the tools the student is expected to use
- Address identified language disorders
- Support literacy instruction
- Utilize ESL language/literacy instruction techniques
- Integrate Aided Language Stimulation and Focused Aided Language stimulation
- Explore pragmatic language skills and instruction
6. Manipulate the Environment

- Teach linguistic, social, and strategic competence
- Enable errorless learning
- Incorporate sabotage routines - hidden objects, make mistakes, don’t provide all needed materials, etc.
- Utilize preferred items, activities, people
- Include humor, fun activities, games, play
- Utilize established routines
- Utilize the element of surprise
- Build communication opportunities across settings
- Train communication partners
- Provide opportunities for the student to talk
- Provide easy and consistent access to tech for staff and student

5. Core Vocabulary

- Teach linguistic competence
- Provide access to a core vocabulary slightly above the student’s receptive language level
- Provide core words in single word units
- Model the combination of core words slightly above the student’s expressive language level
- Provide “on the fly” core word creation - low tech or high tech
- Incorporate and model spelling words that are not immediately available in the core word list
- Overtly discuss with staff, parents, and student the importance and power of core words

4. Communication Partner Training

- Teach linguistic and strategic competence
- Learn the system(s) the student uses
- Use even turn taking between oral and non-oral communicators
- Teach staff and peers to be good listeners
  - Respond to communication attempts (Total Communication)
  - Maintain focus on the communicator (not the technology or other topics)
  - Turn taking and seeking clarification
  - Minimal interrupting
  - Confirm communication
- Allow for wait time - silence is OK
- Utilize co-construction techniques (will vary from student to student)
  - “Wh” question - not just yes/no for clarification
- Provide cues appropriately: visual, auditory, physical
3. Incorporate Literacy Instruction

- Teach linguistic competence
  - Direct literacy instruction
    - Phonics
    - Visual approach to literacy
    - Core vocabulary of sight words
  - Incidental literacy modelling
- Opportunities to read and write
  - Accessible books: adapted hard copy and e-books
  - High interest content
  - Academic content
  - Finding the right pencil

2. Teach Pragmatic Language Skills

- Teach linguistic and social competence
  - Four basic pragmatic functions needed
    - Initiation
    - Commenting (neutral, positive, negative)
    - Repair techniques (receptive and expressive)
    - Concluding
  - Non-verbal cues (facial, gesture, context) for the speaker and the listener
- Many more pragmatic functions to explore: turn taking, questioning, requesting, clarifying, questioning, referring, hampering, attention seeking, responding, acknowledging, answering, complaining, rejecting, protesting, informing, describing, greeting, affirming, expressing feelings/opinions, code switching, etc.

1. Role Playing

- Teach linguistic and strategic competence
  - Practice a variety of novel and routine communication scenarios
  - Model expected communication skills and behaviors
  - Use a variety of partners
  - Address pragmatic communication skills
  - Utilize sabotage techniques
  - Use humor to show what happens when communication fails
  - Practice in direct instruction and controlled environmental instructional settings
Where to begin...

- Begin with the easiest step, then gradually add the next easiest, and then the next easiest until you get to the hardest
  - Objective Opportunity Chart
  - Refer to the Implementation Plan timeline and person(s) responsible
  - Communicate regularly and adjust as needed
- What supports (professional development, materials, time to meet and plan) are needed?
- If breakdowns occur, refer to Janice Light's four areas of communicative competence (linguistic, social, operational, strategic) and determine the area that is in crisis

Follow-up

- Collect data and adjust accordingly
- Tie intervention to TEKS/IEP/PLAAFP/Daily lesson plans
- Address transition issues early and often
- Teach literacy concurrently
Resources

Assessment Resources

- Pre-verbal Communication Schedule: [http://complexneeds.org.uk/modules/Module-2.4-Assessment-monitoring-and-evaluation/All/m08p030b.html](http://complexneeds.org.uk/modules/Module-2.4-Assessment-monitoring-and-evaluation/All/m08p030b.html)
- WATI ASNAT (Chapter 3): [http://www.wati.org](http://www.wati.org)
- Every Move Counts: [http://www.everymovecounts.net/](http://www.everymovecounts.net/)
- Test of Aided Communication Symbol Performance: [http://www.mayerjohnson.com/tasp/?ctt_id=8955651&ctt_adnw=Google&ctt_ch=ps&ctt_entity=tc&ctt_cli=2x15381x64070x1648842&ctt_kw=test%20of%20aided%20communication%20symbol%20performance&ctt_adid=9422148664&ctt_nwtype=search&gclid=CNis64ax6KoCFQQI2god9j5y6A](http://www.mayerjohnson.com/tasp/?ctt_id=8955651&ctt_adnw=Google&ctt_ch=ps&ctt_entity=tc&ctt_cli=2x15381x64070x1648842&ctt_kw=test%20of%20aided%20communication%20symbol%20performance&ctt_adid=9422148664&ctt_nwtype=search&gclid=CNis64ax6KoCFQQI2god9j5y6A)
- Some AAC devices have cognitive, linguistic and access assessment tools built into the software.
Core vocabulary resources
- http://aac.unl.edu
- http://www.aacinstute.org
- http://www.vantatenhove.com/papers.shtml (Papers and Resources > Language Intervention Strategies)
- ISAAC’s AAC professional journal
- ASHA professional journals and SIG 12/Interv
- http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vib2_BDCXc

Literacy and AAC resources
- Dr. Janice Light http://aacliteracy.psu.edu
- Center for Literacy and Disability Studies http://www.med.unc.edu/ahs/clds/
- Alternate Pencil
- Reading Assessment and AT
- Route 66
- Bridge Assessment
- Tarheel Reader
- Universal Design for Learning http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bDvKnY0g6e4
- TATN http://www.texasat.net/default.aspx?name=resources.aim

Implementation resources
- AAC Kids http://aackids.psu.edu/index.php/page/show/id/14
- Gail VanTatenhove http://www.vantatenhove.com
- Linda Burkhart http://www.lburkhart.com
- AAC Intervention http://www.aacintervention.com
- USAAC Scoop It http://www.scoop.it/t/speak-up-1
- Practical AAC http://practicalaalac.org
- YAACK http://aac.unl.edu/yaack/
- SETBC http://www.setbc.org/
- Communication Supports Inventory http://licfcy.org/aac
Implementation resources

- Every Move Counts: http://www.everymovecounts.net/
- Environmental Communication Teaching
  http://www.everymovecounts.net/documents/strategies.pdf
- Tangible Symbol System: http://www.designtolearn.com/
- Language Acquisition through Motor Planning (LAMP)
  http://www.aacandautism.com/
- PODD: Pragmatic Organization Dynamic Display
- ACN Communication Partners:

Good Books to Have