

Authentic Communication with AAC:

Strategies for Implementation in Natural Settings

Rachael Langley, MA, CCC-SLP
Reach Language, LLC

MSHA 2022 Annual Conference - East Lansing, Michigan



About the presenter

Rachael Langley, MA, CCC-SLP

- Michigan-born
- MSU grad x 2
- 20th year
- Speech-language pathologist working in preschool through 6th grade
- Supported ECSE, self-contained programs, & ASD classrooms
- AAC Consultant
- family, biking, travel

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Topics for Today

- Definitions: Authenticity in Communication
 - The role of motivation
- Strategies for Authentic Communication
 - Minimal, healthy prompting
 - Verbal referencing & attributing meaning
- Supportive Communication Environments
- Maximizing opportunities

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What makes communication authentic?

- It teaches that communication is personal
- It emphasizes language learning
- It allows for spontaneity



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Authentic Communication is Personally Meaningful

Recognize that the things **YOU** want to talk about, are often not the learner wants to talk about.

Following directions	Finding Nemo
Letters/letter sounds	Letters – in order only
Naming peers, greeting peers	Pipes & plumbing
Story re-telling	Pokemon
Answering questions	Music
	Lights

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What makes communication authentic?

Touch the blue one.

Tell me, "I want pencil, please."

Show me "dog" on your talker.

If you already know the answer, why should they tell you?

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More teaching, less testing

graphic by Dr. Carole Zangari

www.praacticalaac.org

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What makes communication authentic?

Motivation is key to authentic communication!

- Is it interesting?
- Is it meaningful?
- Is it fun?



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Resources & Examples



Books with Repeated and Predictable Text

Include text that repeats throughout the story
provide repeated opportunities for using target words
allow children to participate in literacy activities before they learn to read



Lauren Enders

Make it Fun! Activity Ideas for Jump Starting AAC Learning



Lauren S. Enders, M.A., CCC-SLP
lenders@bucksu.org



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LDuP3ObMQLo&t=157s>

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Resources & Examples



Amanda Hartmann

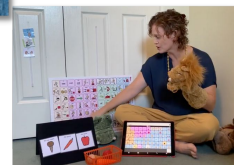


Engage and interact with AAC learners

How can we create opportunities for communication? This article gives examples of engaging and interesting activities that give the AAC user motivation to communicate.

AssistiveWare

<https://www.assistiveware.com/learn-aac/engage-and-interact>



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Resources & Examples

Jane Farrall



Jane Farrall
CONSULTING



Teaching (and Learning) the Alphabet: Playing with Letter Shapes and Sounds

It is currently the summer break in Australia and I've had a few emails and messages from teachers who are spending time over the break getting ready for the next school year. Several of these...

Jane Farrall Consulting - Jan 4, 2016

<https://www.janefarrall.com/teaching-and-learning-the-alphabet-playing-with-letter-shapes-and-sounds/>

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Strategies for Authentic Communication

Minimal, healthy prompting

- How do we define prompting?
- What is the goal of prompting?



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Prompting Defined

Prompting: the action of saying something to persuade, encourage, or remind someone to say or do something.

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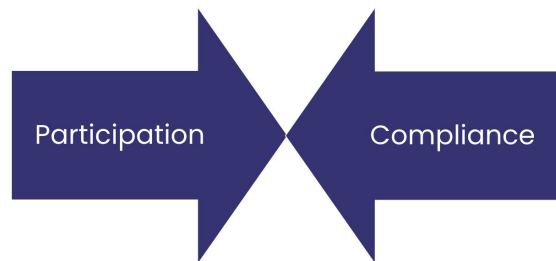
Where do we find 'prompting'?



- Speech-Language Goals
- Instructional Goals
 - Non-standardized language
 - Minimal
 - Moderate
 - Maximum
 - Partial-verbal
 - Full-physical

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Strategies for Authentic Communication



What is our goal?

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Strategies for Authentic Communication



Ask:

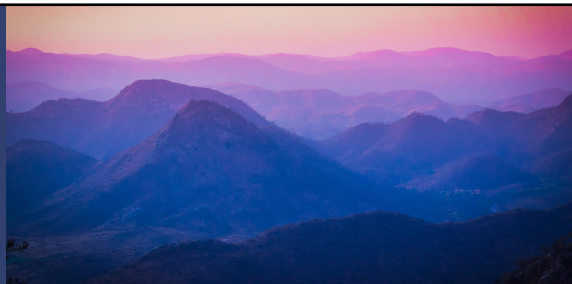
Is a response required?

Are there ample, low-pressure opportunities for the learner to engage?

Are communication opportunities generally question/answer?

Is there a focus on building relationships?

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If I'm prompting, I'm trying to get the kid to say what I expect them to say. That's training, not teaching.

— Dr. Karen Erickson

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Whose message is it?

"Prompts should always be used to support the child to communicate their own message and never used to elicit an externally contrived message."

- Linda Burkhart, ATIA 2014

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Can prompting be done safely?

Non-directive strategies that can be considered prompts.

These 'prompt' someone or invite them to join in a conversational turn.



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Hierarchies to organize prompts

AAC Prompting Hierarchy (From Positive AAC class - Rocky Bay 2010; Semer 2010; YALACK 1995)

1	Expectant Pause	Give the child time to respond or the opportunity to initiate communication.
2	Indirect Nonverbal Prompt	Use your body language to indicate to the child that something is expected (e.g. expectant facial expression, questioning hand motion with a shrug, etc.).
3	Indirect Verbal Prompt	Use an open-ended question that tells the child that something is expected but nothing too specific (e.g. "How what?", "What should we do next?").
4	Request a Response	If there is still no response, you can try to direct the child more specifically (e.g. "Tell me what you want.", "You need to ask me.").
5	Gestural Cue	You can point to the symbol or keyword your finger there for several seconds to get the child started with his message.
6	Partial Verbal Prompt	If there is still no response, give them part of the expected response (e.g. "You want to the...").
7	Direct Model	If still no response, model on the student's device (e.g. "The bear is said."). Pause and wait for the child to imitate or respond.
8	Physical Assistance	Provide hand-over-hand assistance to help the child to form the message using their device.

Rachael Langley 2015 - InspireLearning.org

R Langley, 2015 adapted from
Positive Action - Rocky Bay 2010

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Hierarchies to organize prompts

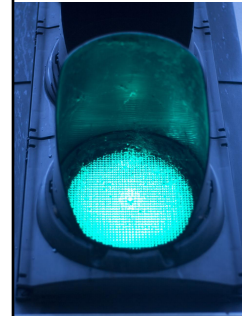
Green is good

AAC Prompting Hierarchy	
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5	Gestural Cue You can point to the symbol or keyboard your finger there for several seconds to get the child started with his message.
6	Partial Verbal Prompt If there is still no response, give them part of the expected response (e.g., "You went to the...").
7	Direct Model If still no response, model on the student's device (e.g., "The bear is sad," "Pause and wait for the child to imitate or respond).
8	Physical Assistance Provide hand-over-hand assistance to help the child to form the message using their device.

R Langley, 2015 adapted from Positive Action - Rocky Bay 2010

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Strategies for Authentic Communication



- Expectant pause: providing wait time
- Indirect non-verbal prompt: body language or facial expression inviting comment or participation
- Indirect Verbal Prompt: I wonder... or What would happen if...

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Hierarchies to organize prompts

Green is good

Yellow is restrictive

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Prompting Strategies that Direct Student Behavior

- Request a response
- Gestural cue
- Partial verbal cue



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Teaching Language

- Showing the student examples of how they could respond
- Giving peer models
- Allowing learner to self-select words
- Welcoming but not requiring a response

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Telling What to Say

- Directing learner to words they "should" say
- Starting their sentence for them
- Choosing or limiting the words that they can select
- Requiring a response

Hierarchies to organize prompts

Green is good

Yellow is restrictive

Red requires the learner to be a passive member in the communicative act

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AAC Prompting Hierarchy	
1	Expectant Pause Give the child time to respond or the opportunity to initiate communication.
2	Indirect Nonverbal Prompt Use your body language to indicate to the child that something is expected (e.g., expectant facial expression, questioning hand motion with a string, etc.).
3	Indirect Verbal Prompt Use an open-ended question that tells the child that something is expected but nothing too specific (e.g., "How about?", "What should we do next?").
4	Request a Response If there is still no response, you can try to direct the child more specifically (e.g., "Tell me what you want," "You need to ask me,").
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R Langley, 2015 adapted from Positive Action - Rocky Bay 2010

Risks Associated with Physical Prompting

Physical prompting tells the student that their role in communication is to be passive.

Physical prompting tells the student that the goal is to say what the teacher wants them to say.

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Alternatives to physical prompting

"...skills training for children with severe developmental delays [indicate] the passive observation of a model demonstrating the target skill is more effective than interactive modeling involving hand-over-hand instruction with verbal prompting."

- Biederman et al, 1998

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Uncommon Sense Blog, used with permission

What about 'Modeling'?

"Modeling" for Instruction

- Showing the student examples of how they could respond
- Providing peer models
- "Let me show you how you COULD do it."
- If they don't do it, that's okay
- We will keep showing them how, until they are ready

"Modeling" for Performance

- Directing learner to words they "should" say
- Requiring a response
- "First I do it, then you do it."
- If they don't say it, someone will help them say it.

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What about 'Modeling'?

Demonstrate

- Showing the student examples of how they could respond
- Providing peer models
- "Let me show you how you COULD do it."
- If they don't do it, that's okay
- We will keep showing them how, until they are ready

"Modeling" for Performance

- Directing learner to words they "should" say
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Strategies for Authentic Communication

Modeling aka:
aided language input
aided language stimulation
partner augmented input

- research based
- non-directive
- easy strategy to implement



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THE POSITIVE IMPACT OBSERVED
IN RESEARCH LEADS AUTHORS TO
STATE THAT THERE IS

**"a strong argument
for using AAC
modeling as a
foundation of AAC
intervention."**

SENNOTT, ET AL 2016

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Have an AAC
system with
rich language
available.

Strategies for Authentic Communication

you go
put in
he drink
I see
play more
not take
more help



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www.project-core.com

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Module 1: Project Core Overview
An overview of the multi-year, iterative development project to create the Project Core implementation model for teachers and classroom staff.

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MODULE 2

Module 2: Universal Core Vocabulary
Introduction to the Universal Core vocabulary, available formats for free download, and examples of the flexibility offered for teaching and learning across content.

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MODULE 3

Module 3: Beginning Communicators
Introduction to the many ways beginning communicators express themselves, and strategies for identifying and lowering all early forms, while making connections to symbols.

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MODULE 4

Module 4: Aided Language Input
Overview of how to use aided language input strategies to share students what is possible and encourage their use of graphic symbols.

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MODULE 5

Module 5: Supporting Individual Access to the Universal Core
Review of access considerations for students with a range of physical, sensory and cognitive needs, and available tools for identifying suitable Universal Core formats for each student.

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Individual or group formats for learning

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Strategies for Authentic Communication

Verbal referencing & attributing meaning



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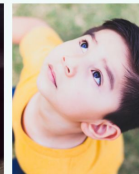
SAY WHAT
YOU SEE



"I see your big smile! I think you LIKE that."



"You sat down. I think you might be tired. Let's be DONE with this activity."



"You are looking UP. I think you see that airplane. It is loud."

RACHAEL LANGLEY AAC SPECIALIST

Verbal referencing

Describing any behavior that you observe and could see as meaningful.

Gayle Porter, creator of PODD communication system

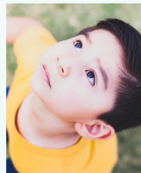
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"You are looking UP. I think you see that airplane. It is loud."

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Attributing Meaning
Assigning purpose or intent to behavior, body language or facial expression.

Resource:

The AAC Coach
(Facebook, Instagram, website)

Strategy: Verbal Referencing

Say what you see!

Verbal referencing is a scaffolding technique in which a communication partner or accomplice (i.e., helper not involved in the primary exchange) describes what a learner is doing, as well as the his/her interpretation of the learner's action. For those learning to use AAC, verbal referencing is particularly powerful when it is used in conjunction with aided language/modeling.

Here's what to do:

- 1) Describe the communication behavior you see.
- 2) Say what the communication behavior means to you, and
- 3) Model corresponding language on the AAC system.

Examples:

- "I see you walking to the door. makes me think you WANT GO"
- "I hear your voice and your face looks upset. Maybe you're thinking THAT MAKES ME MAD!"

(CAPTIALS=AAC Selections)



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Creating Supportive Communication Environments



- Communication within arms reach
- Engaging opportunities and activities to talk about
- Developing comfort with familiar words and routines

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Creating Supportive Communication Environments

Keep AAC Close

- Home base
- Portability

AAC isn't the focus of activities or therapy. But it should accompany any activity where you would naturally use speech.



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Building a Communication-Equipped Classroom

Classroom Communication Plan - EXAMPLE

Time	Classroom Activity	Communication Opportunity	Targeted Language (words in all CAPS are modeled on AAC)	Team Member
8:45	Greetings	Greeting staff/peers upon entering classroom	Respond to smile/body language. Offer 2-4 comments/opinions: - I LIKE your shoes! - Can I HELP with your coat? - Let's GO to the bathroom.	
9:00	Choice Time	Making choices between preferred tasks	Offer 2-4 items or songs Model: - You WANT this one - I LIKE that one - YOU have 10 minutes to play!	
9:20-9:50	Morning circle/attendance	Reviewing the schedule Who is here today	Talk about the day and who is here: - WHO is HERE - I am! YOU are. He's NOT here. - WHAT are we doing first? - We will GO to gym! - Today we will SEE OT and Speech	

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Building a Communication-Equipped Classroom

Classroom Communication Plan - EXAMPLE

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8:45	Greetings	Greeting staff/peers upon entering classroom	Respond to smile/body language. Offer 2-4 comments/opinions: - I LIKE your shoes! - Can I HELP with your coat? - Let's GO to the bathroom.	Your turn! Want help?
9:00	Choice Time	Making choices between preferred tasks	Offer 2-4 items or songs Model: - You WANT this one - I LIKE that one - YOU have 10 minutes to play!	
9:20-9:50	Morning circle/attendance	Reviewing the schedule Who is here today	Talk about the day and who is here: - WHO is HERE - I am! YOU are. He's NOT here. - WHAT are we doing first? - We will GO to gym! - Today we will SEE OT and Speech	Open it. You like it!

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Creating Supportive Communication Environments

Authentic reasons to communicate

Instead of:

Try this:

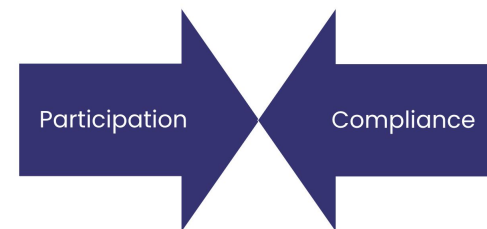


Adult withholds the desired item.
Child is encouraged to say "I want ____"

Adult gives access to desired item.
Adult comments,
"You LIKE it. I have one, too!"

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Remember: What is our goal?



To build authenticity, focus on engagement and play
rather than creating compliance-based tasks.

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Build Language Opportunities



I have...	We have the same!	That's mine.	You're funny!
I like...	What is that?		
You get...	I don't like it.	Stop it.	I'm done!

I have...	We have the same!	That's mine.	You're funny!
I like...	What is that?		
You get...	I don't like it.	Stop it.	I'm done!

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

"TO SUPPORT
authentic
decision-making
CHOICES MUST BE
GROUNDED IN
REAL-LIFE
EXPERIENCES."

Authentic decision-making is not the time to teach the
meaning of a symbol. That has to happen earlier,
or people cannot make a meaningful choice.

Susan Bruce
NJC Principles and Practices Video
www.asha.org/njc

graphic by Rachael Langley - Reach Language, LLC

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Resource:

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

Communication
Bill of Rights

www.asha.org/njc

Maximizing Communication

Opportunities

Build a team

- shared access to AAC
- shared knowledge of strategies
- shared goals for learning

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BY 18 MONTHS
babies have heard
4,380 HOURS

OF SPOKEN
LANGUAGE

and we don't expect them
to be fluent speakers

YET

If AAC learners only see symbols modeled for
communication twice weekly for 20-30 minutes, it will take

84 YEARS

for them to have the same exposure to aided language
as an 18 month old has to spoken language.

statistic from Jane Korsten - QWAT Listserv 2011
photo by Rachael Langley - AAC Specialist

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The power of more
opportunities

Thank you!

Questions?

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