AAC in the Classroom

NWACS - May 23rd, 2023

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Life Skills Teacher - Everett Public Schools

About my program:

- Life Skills teacher in Everett since 2004 - last 12 at Jefferson Elementary
- K-5th grade - Goal of 10 students - have had as many as 13
- Staff comprised of 2 classroom paraeducators plus 1:1s (currently at 7 adults)
- Lots of staff turnover post Covid (currently have a lot of agency staff)
- SLP and OT/PT embed and pull students (model and collaborate - it makes life EASIER)
- Use multiple methods of AAC within my program

This evening:

We will:

- Talk about what AAC I use and how I incorporate it into my instruction
- Discuss academic areas in which you can add AAC modeling and use
- Discuss ways you can support parents and your staff to try
- Reflect on barriers and determine how you may want to begin or improve - GO SLOW and give yourself grace
- Tips and tricks that have made it work for me
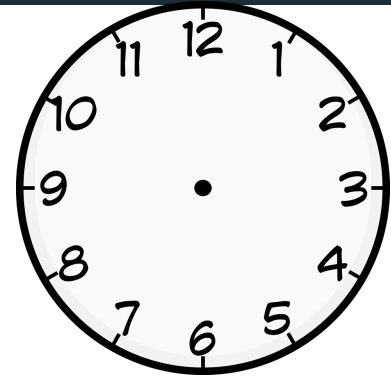
My "why" (here is where I get on my soapbox)

Behavior IS communication

- Dozen years ago - began to WATCH the SLP working with my students
- Saw students work with her and began to truly SEE what they were doing
- Realization: content and instruction isn't useful if they don't feel valued, seen, and HEARD in a way that has meaning to THEM

AAC used in my room

- PODD (Pragmatic Organized Dynamic Display)
- Core Vocabulary
- VOCA systems with Communication Apps
- PCS images (use some sign also)
- GoTalk with PCS images
- Context boards
- RAAP boards
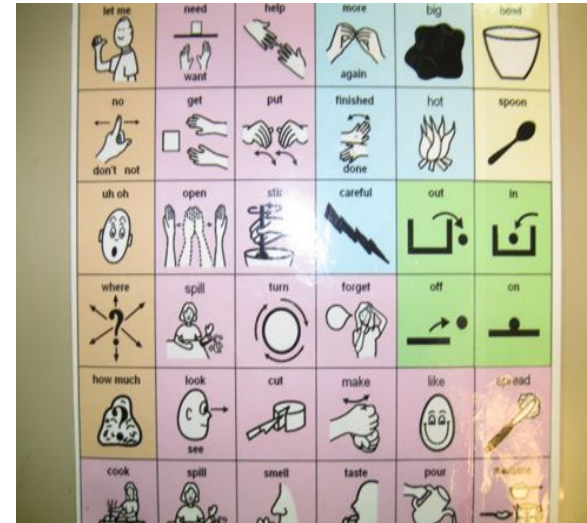
AAC we use daily in B104:

- Core activities
- PECS-like comm
- Individual PCS images
- Core
- AAC devices
- RAAP
- Context and images (math)

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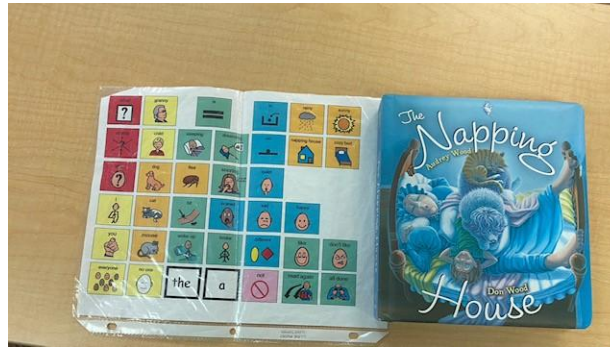- Core
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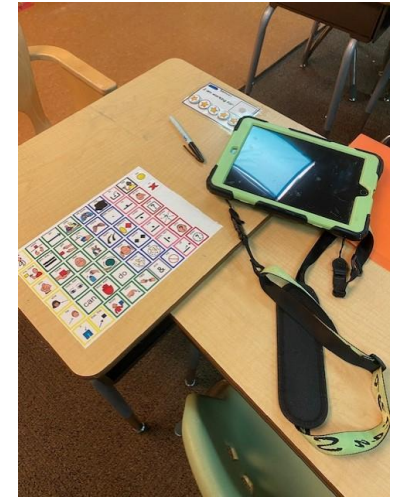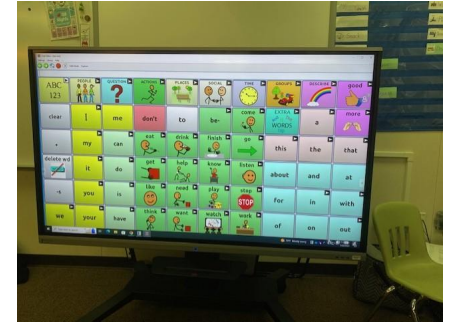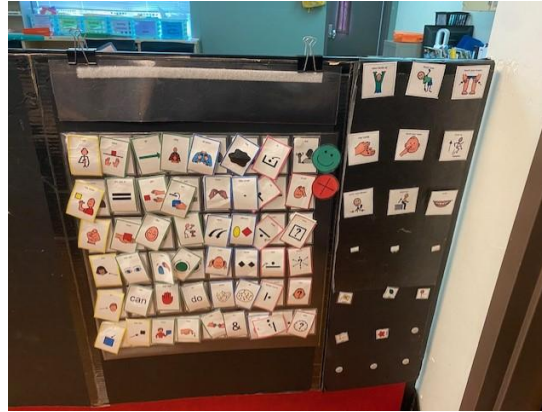
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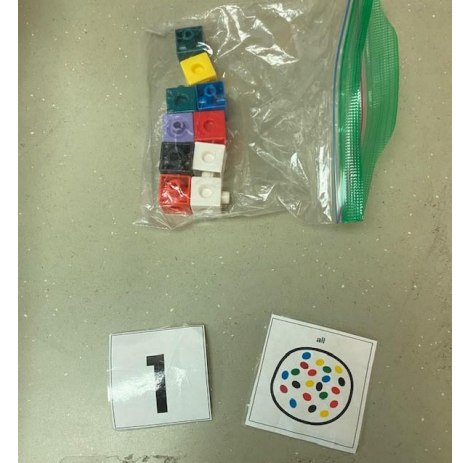
Go beyond "I want"

- Areas where AAC can be used (because it isn't communication if I know what you are going to say… (my mentor's favorite phrase)
1. Reading
2. Math
3. Written Expression
4. Self-help/Adaptive
5. Social (we don't use AAC to say what we want for snack)

Notes:

What of the suggestions I am making would you like to try?

Reading:

Mathematics:

Written Expression:

Self-help/Adaptive:

Personal-Social/Behavioral:

What about at home? And even with staff

- Making yourself vulnerable helps EVERYONE feel safe to try
  - Make suggestions and model a little bit
- Suggest time when kids are not around/in bed to chat
  - Provide canned phrases to try or find "safely"
- It is ideal to use it, but valid to know that using AAC

all the time is not possible

My hopes for classrooms…

Myself: new school and program = new opportunities (get back to it), remake and start again (everyone needs to improve their practice)

Teachers: Please remember, speech does NOT happen in isolation. You DO want them to communicate with you (even if you don't like what they say).

SLPs: Be gentle and model - know that teachers are overwhelmed (just like you) and need to SEE how this work can help them and most importantly, the students. Ask to co-teach a group and model while the teacher does a lesson

Parents: Feel safe in trying, asking and doing what you can at home as well

Pick one thing, try it (be vulnerable and mess up) - you will get better

Final thoughts (remember):
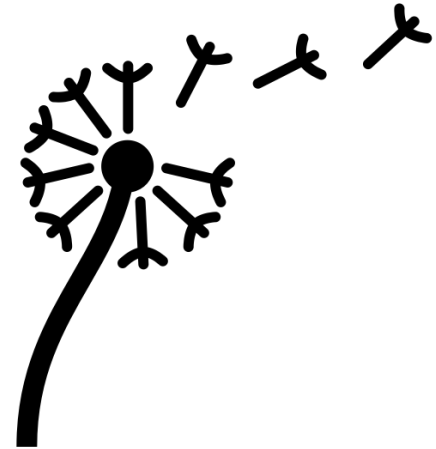
Go slow now to go fast later

COMMUNICATION IS MESSY - BUT ALWAYS WORTH IT

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Cell: 206-399-1004 (I have welcomed visitors in the past and may in the future if you are interested)