AAC for Early Intervention: Foundations for Symbol Use - Teaching initiation and social engagement through gestures and affect

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Preface

- AAC benefits young children, there are no prerequisites and no age restrictions.

- This includes aided AAC such as switches, picture symbols or tangible symbols, voice output systems or speech generating devices. See Special Education Technology Center - overview video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e9djSXV5orQ

- For some children, their individual differences (e.g. sensory, motor, vision) can be barriers to access aided AAC. They are not showing that they can access switches or access or see picture symbols in a meaningful way.

Agenda

- Look at different communication "programs" that emphasis pre-symbolic communication, that is, communication through vocalization, gaze or gesture.

- Discuss what it means to recommend "multimodal" communication.

- Describe 5 different strategies you can try to encourage initiation and engagement.

Before a child uses words...

...They use gestures!

eye contact

facial expressions

Body postures

Examples of Programs to Support Communication in Early Childhood

NWACS NorthWest Augmentative Communication Society

Hanen Program: It Takes Two to Talk

- Recognize your child's communication signals

- Identify what motivates your child to communicate

- Use the strategy "Follow the Child's Lead"

- Adjust everyday routines to help your go back and forth in interacting

- Simplify how you talk to your child to support understanding and use

- https://www.hanen.org/Programs/For-Parents/It-Takes-Two-to-Talk.aspx

Follow the Child's Lead
Observe, Wait, Listen — Be face to face — Imitate — Interpret — Comment — Join in and play

PLAI Curriculum: Promoting Learning Through Active Interactions

- Understand your child's cues

- Identify your child's preferences

- Establish predictable routines

- Establish turn taking

- Encourage communicative initiations

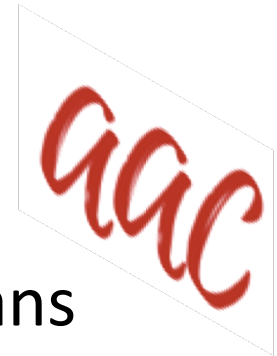- https://cms-kids.com/providers/early_steps/Training/itds/Module4/lesson4-5.html

Examples of Programs to Support Early Communication

Prelinguistic Mileau Teaching

- Arranging the environment
- Following the child's lead
- Building social routines during normal daily routines
- Goals can include increase frequency of nonverbal communication (but they state ideal participant has expressive vocabulary <10)
- Prelinguistic Milieu Teaching (PMT) Procedures
  - Imitation, modeling sounds in child's repertoire
  - Imitate motor/vocal acts
  - Provide desired object contingent on looking
  - Pretend not to understand gestures to evoke more communication
  - Prompt, models, natural consequences
- https://sites.google.com/site/spring2016independentproject/play-based-direct-and-indirect-language-stimulation-approaches/prelinguistic-milieu-teaching-methods-paul-norbury-2012

Penn State University

- Identify contexts
- Provide effective means
- Select appropriate vocabulary
- Set up the environment
- Use interaction strategies
- https://aackids.psu.edu/index.php/page/show/id/1/

Examples of Programs to Support Early Communication through Social Emotional Development

DIR Floortime
- Self-regulation and interest in the world
- Engaging and relating
- Intentionality and purposeful two-way communication
- Complex communication and shared problem solving
- Using symbols and creating emotional ideas
- https://www.icdl.com/dir/fedcs

SCERTS Model
- Social communication
- Emotional regulation
- Transactional support
- https://scerts.com/wp-content/uploads/SCERTSJJ_RM.pdf

Summary

- Good research base
- Each targets slightly different needs based on where the child is developmentally.
  - Pre-symbolic
  - Emerging symbolic
- Take into consideration a child's individual differences, their sensory, motor, vision, hearing preferences.
- Consider that the most important variable is building a safe, trusting relationship.

Recommending Multimodal Communication

- Multimodal
  - Vocalizations/speech
  - Gestures/signs
  - Low tech aided AAC
  - High tech aided AAC
- Affirms for families we are working on building successful communication.
- Affirms for families we are not "abandoning" speech development.
- Gives families a variety of different strategies to try at home, dependent on context/routines.

Strategies for Initiation and Engagement

- Stop talking

- Slow down, slower than you think

- DIR Floortime: Wait, Watch, Wonder

- Follow child's lead (increases initiation, builds a trusting relationship)

- DIR Floortime: Wooing, using High Affect

- Objects/toys turn taking: Use your hands, voice and affect to encourage attention shift between object/toy and partner.

- No objects/toys turn taking: Use your hands, voice, affect, "silly social" actions, you are the most fun thing.

- Make your hands available

Video Clips

Using eye gaze and gesture

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k6x8nvi9Y_U

Using eye gaze and gesture, sensory

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aaJS2ebx4Xc

Using gesture

https://txdeafblindproject.org/communication/interaction-bonding/turn-taking-play-strategies/

Using gesture - clapping

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aHI2Evay5PI

Using gesture – giving

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z5JYNkL8QXg

Using objects with gestures, using your hands, using vocalizations

https://txdeafblindproject.org/instructional-strategies/interaction-and-bonding/building-security/

Using gestures - sensory

https://txdeafblindproject.org/communication/interaction-bonding/imitative-play/

Summary

- Need to know where your child is developmentally in order to support their communication growth

- Consider a child's individual differences when thinking about what AAC systems or strategies to use.

- Building a trusting relationship through pre-symbolic communication is vital to a child's social and emotional growth.

- Multimodal – we can introduce aided AAC or symbol use but NOT to the exclusion of supporting pre-symbolic communication.

Additional References

- https://www.nationaldb.org/info-center/prelinguistic-communication-practice-perspective/

- Shout out to Van Dijk! https://txdeafblindproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/ConversationsWithout-LanguageBuildingQualityInteractions.pdf