



Week 14: Reading with AAC (continued)



AAcTion Steps

StepInAAC.org/A-Week14 (Online / PDF)

Core words: it, same

Communication function: Describing



Sign Posts (videos)

StepInAAC.org/P-Week14 (YouTube playlist)

14-1: Descriptive Talking

Video: StepInAAC.org/V14-1-DescriptiveTalking

Handout: StepInAAC.org/H14-1-DescriptiveTalking

14-2: Picture Book Walk Through

Video: StepInAAC.org/V14-2-InformationalText

Handout: StepInAAC.org/H-ReadingWithAAC

14-3: Make-Your-Own-Books

Video: StepInAAC.org/V14-3-MakeBooks



Travelog (newsletter)

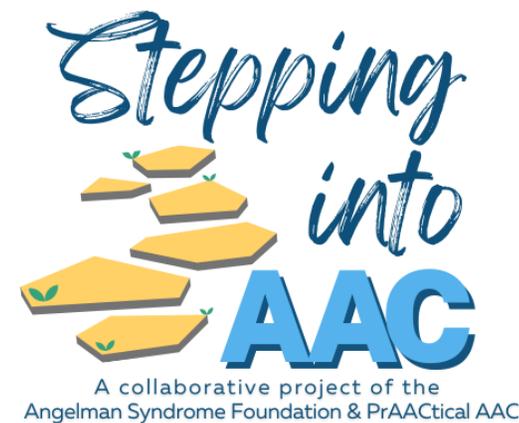
StepInAAC.org/N-Week14 (Online / PDF)

Topics:

- The Role of Questioning in AAC Learning
- Communication Bill of Rights: Highlights
- More to Explore

Question of the Week: "I don't want to bombard my child with questions when we read together but I don't know how else to get them to communicate?"





Let's take time to talk about what we are reading with our learner. When you are sharing a story and perhaps looking at the same illustrations, this is a great time to practice commenting on the story. What is the same about the characters? They both have glasses - that is the SAME. Or perhaps you comment on what might happen next. "IT looks like they might fall!" Describing what you see in the story is a great way to model language while reading.

Hands-on Activities

Day 1

READ: Words are all around! You might choose to read a magazine, cereal box, or newspaper. Point out familiar letters or words. "IT has a J like your name!"

Day 2

FIND: Find two books with similar characters. Talk about what is the SAME about the covers. Are the characters the SAME? Is the author the SAME?

Day 3

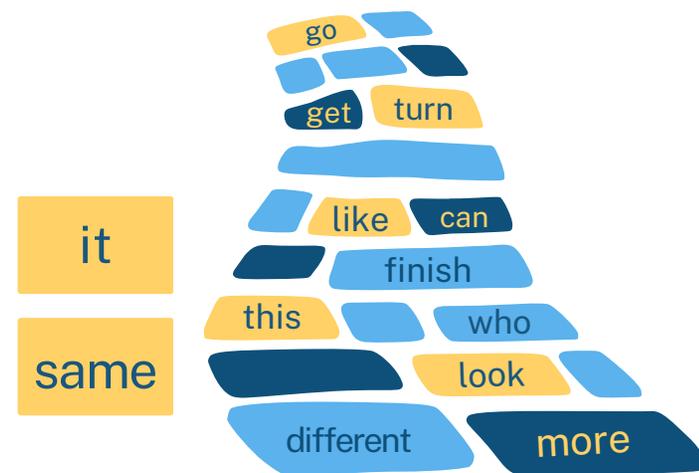
THINK: Think about giving each book a rating when you finish. "IT was good/bad." or "IT gets three stars." Invite your learner to give feedback, too.

Day 4

TRY: Keep communication close while reading. Try pausing for a bit between pages. See if your learner comments during that pause.

Day 5

SHARE: Consider making a book with pictures from your family. Use a simple line of text below each picture. Share it with family or friends!





Reading with AAC

A collaborative project of the Angelman Syndrome Foundation and PrAACtical AAC

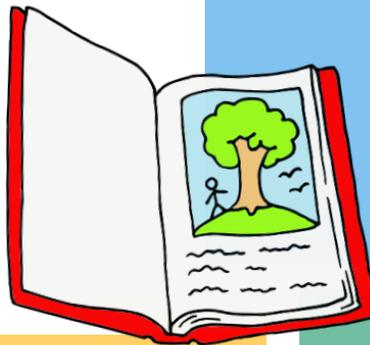
Books extend language. Through them, we explore & experience a greater variety of words & language structures than daily routines & activities can offer.

Engaging with books & AAC lays a foundation for a love of books & reading, as well as literacy skill development.

And it provides special moments of connection between AAC learners & others!!

Shared Reading: The Basics

- ✓ Provide a variety of books. Let your learner choose.
- ✓ Ensure AAC is available.
- ✓ Explore books with your learner in an interesting way:
 - Read the words, or just talk about the pictures / story
 - Comment on the pictures
 - Notice & describe
 - Share an opinion
 - Ask questions to show your curiosity
- ✓ Invite your learner to participate with an open-ended question, comment, pause, or fill-in the blank opportunity.
- ✓ Respond to your learner. Connection is key!!



Engaging with Picture Books

Picture books aren't just for young children.

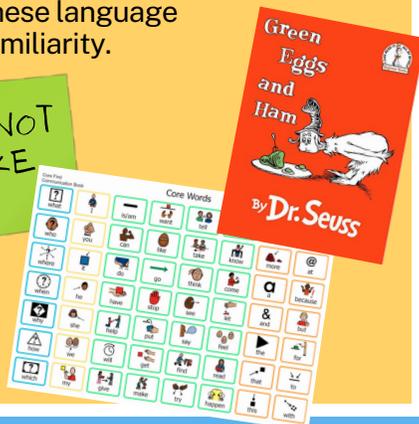
- Impactful illustrations expand language & interest on a broad range of topics.
- Sticky notes can be helpful to pre-plan what you may say on each page.



Repetitive Lines & Rhyming Books

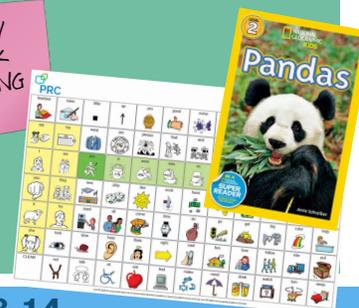
Through rhythm & predictability, these language structures invite interest & build familiarity.

- Establish turn-taking through repetition.
- Pause & invite a turn at a predictable moment.
- Have open expectations about how they participate



Engaging with Informational Text

- Informational or factual texts with pictures can be highly engaging; they may include non-fiction picture books, magazines, websites, museum brochures, menus....so many options!
- Explore informational text just as you would a picture book;. It's still shared reading!





Links & Attributions

Reading with AAC



Stepping Into AAC homepage:

stepinaac.org/Welcome



Week 13 Video Playlist :

stepinaac.org/P-Week13



Week 14 Video Playlist :

stepinaac.org/P-Week14



Handout:

stepinaac.org/H-ReadingWithAAC



Stepping Into AAC, Week 13 bundle:

stepinaac.org/WB13



Stepping Into AAC, Week 14 bundle:

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Content for this Video & Handout informed and inspired by the work of :
Karen Erickson, David Koppenhaver, Caroline Musselwhite, Gretchen Hanser,
Erin Sheldon, Linda Burkhart, Joanne Cafiero

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Descriptive Language

A collaborative project of the Angelman Syndrome Foundation and PrAACtical AAC

Descriptive talking or descriptive language focuses on using vocabulary available in a learners AAC to describe, inform, & explain concepts or situations.

Descriptive Language can be used with books, learning activities, & in everyday teachable moments.

Open-Ended Questions invite *Descriptive Language*

What do you know about rainforests?

IT is a WET forest that GETS a LOT of rain. MANY plants & animals LIVE THERE & NEED one another.

This is contrasted with *Referential Questions* that seek a specific answer

What biome is a forest that gets a lot of rain and sustains many plants & animals?

Rainforest

Topic: Literature

Descriptive Language:

Hagrid is a **GOOD FRIEND** to Harry, Ron & Hermione. He **HELPS** them & **TELLS** them things he should **NOT**. He is the game-keeper : he **LOVES** & **TAKES CARE** of **ALL** the animals at Hogwarts.



Referential Question:

Who is the game-keeper at Hogwarts?
Answer: HAGRID

Open-Ended Question:

Let's talk about Hagrid. What do we know about him?

Possible Answers & Informative Feedback:

- GOOD:** he is a **GOOD** & loyal friend
- NOT:** he often forgets & tells them things he should **NOT** tell them!
- ALL:** he loves & takes care of **ALL** animals & magical creatures, even dangerous ones

Open-Ended Questions can sound like:

- What did we learn about?
- Tell me about__?
- What does it remind you of?
- What did you find interesting?

Topic: Biology

Descriptive Language:

Roots are the part of the plant that is **UNDER** ground. They **GET** water and food from the soil and **TAKE** it **UP** to **FEED** the plant. They **GROW DOWN** to anchor the plant or keep it **STANDING STRONG**.



Referential Question:

What part of the plant grows under ground?
Answer: ROOTS

Open-Ended Question:

How do roots help plants grow?
Possible Answers & Informative Feedback:

- GET:** roots **GET** food & water
- UP:** roots take nutrients **UP**
- STRONG:** roots anchor the plant so it can stand **STRONG**

Descriptive Language + Open-Ended Questions invite learners to:

- respond & engage as they are able, & cues communication partners to expand on responses
- explore & use words available in their AAC, including words that communication partners have modeled when talking about a topic



Links & Attributions

Descriptive Talking



Stepping Into AAC homepage:

stepinaac.org/Welcome



Video :

stepinaac.org/V14-1-DescriptiveTalking



Handout:

stepinaac.org/H14-1-DescriptiveTalking



Stepping Into AAC, Week 14 bundle:

stepinaac.org/WB14



Content for this Video & Handout informed and inspired by the work of :

Gail VanTatenhove, Erin Sheldon



Inside this Issue

THE COMMUNICATION BILL OF RIGHTS

Highlights from this important document that guides our AAC practices

QUESTION OF THE WEEK

"I don't want to bombard my child with questions when we read together but I don't know how else to get them to communicate."

MORE TO EXPLORE

References, links to videos, resources

THE ROLE OF QUESTIONING IN AAC LEARNING

It's All About Balance

While asking our learners too many questions is less than ideal when promoting fun, low-pressure interactions, we cannot avoid them completely. The key is to ask the right types of questions and the right amount of questions to keep engagement high and keep the interactions moving. Keep the following tips handy when interacting with your learner:



CONTINUED ON P. 2



THE ROLE OF QUESTIONING IN AAC LEARNING

continued

Find a balance.

We want to keep interactions with our learners fun and low-pressure. If we don't ask enough questions, we may lose out on opportunities to target specific concepts or model the concept of asking a question. If we ask too many questions, our learners may shut down and feel bombarded. So how can we maintain the right balance? We can model other types of language functions such as commenting or describing. This helps in maintaining a low-pressure interaction with lots of opportunities for language building.

Don't be afraid to use questions as part of your interactions. By using the tips above, you will ensure that your learner has the opportunity to learn about asking and answering questions in fun and meaningful ways!



HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE COMMUNICATION BILL OF RIGHTS



This week, we continue to share more highlights from the Communication Bill of Rights document from the National Joint Committee for the Communication Needs of Persons with Severe Disabilities. Let's continue to take a deeper dive into some highlights from this document.

The right to ask for and give information, including information about changes in routine and environment

Have you ever had a last minute change in your day's routine? You may have to quickly adapt and make changes to location or activity; you may even need to shift your mindset to accommodate this new change! Imagine not being told about this change. Let's say you are heading to work, driving to the same building you go to every single day at 9am. You get there, park, and walk up to the front door. It's locked. You happen to look over at a sign on the window. "Sorry, ___ has moved to a new location." How would this affect you? We all face a variety of changes in routine and environment almost daily. So do our AAC learners! They have the right to be informed about those changes. You may even find that giving them this information as far enough in advance as possible (and even with a rationale or explanation for why something has changed), can lead to easier transitions.

The right to make choices from meaningful alternatives

The right to make your own choices is part of living a life that's meaningful. Our learners have this right. Alejandro's father says that he has loved oatmeal ever since he was little, so every morning the family makes him oatmeal. He has pretty much eaten the same thing for breakfast for the last few years. Once Alejandro was introduced to AAC, he asked for waffles one morning for breakfast. His family was surprised, but obliged and gave him a plate of waffles for breakfast that day. Alejandro ate the entire plate of waffles and asked for more. His family may have never offered him another option if he was not provided with the means to ask for something different. It is so important for us to ensure that our learners are provided with choices and to have their choice implemented.

Join us over the next few weeks as we continue to highlight more from the NJC's Communication Bill of Rights. If you need to revisit the Communication Bill of Rights document in its entirety, check out the supplemental materials in Week 12.





QUESTION OF THE WEEK

"I don't want to bombard my child with questions when we read together but I don't know how else to get them to communicate."

Shared reading is a wonderful way to build connections with your child while providing consistent opportunities for building language. But how can you invite your child to communicate without asking too many direct questions? It may be helpful to revisit last week's newsletter, where we shared some great tips on how to approach interactive book reading with your child.

Continue to identify the ways in which they're already communicating and then model those concepts using AAC.

Are they smiling when you point out a certain character ("I SEE you smiling. You LIKE Ariel."), pushing the book away ("Hmm, you may not LIKE this story"), or trying to turn page ("Let's SEE what happens NEXT.")?

Use these opportunities to model a variety of language concepts, such as commenting, describing, and labeling.

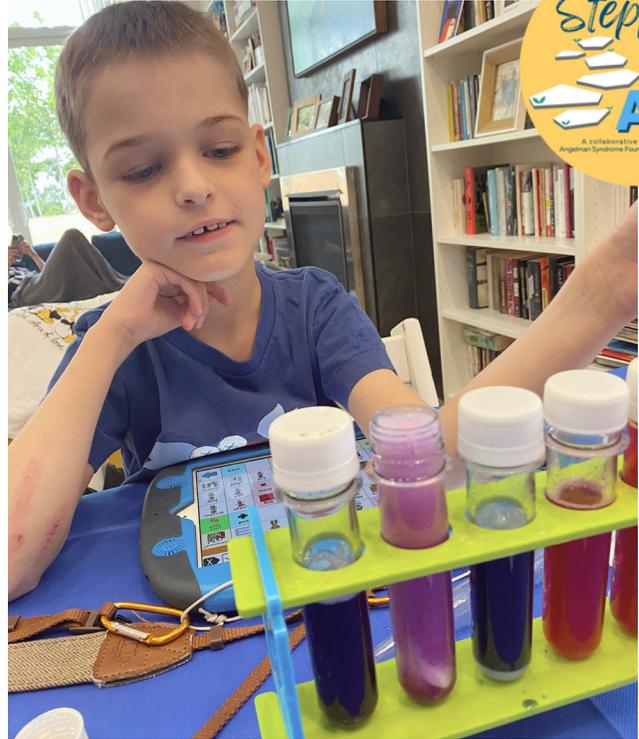
The great thing about books is that many of them follow a predictable structure which allows for consistent opportunities for communication. Think of "Brown Bear" by Eric Carle. Each page contains the same wording ("___, ___, what do you see?", "I see a ___ looking at me!").

You can use this predictable structure to your advantage and combine interaction strategies such as aided language input and wait time to invite your learner to fill in the blank or use core words.

It's important to remember that even if our learners are not always responding with AAC when you'd expect them to, it doesn't mean that they aren't learning or communicating in other ways.

When we model, we do so without expectation.





MORE TO EXPLORE

VIDEO:

Video of the Week: Supporting AAC Learners at Home

Join Erin Sheldon in a fantastic presentation about using descriptive teaching at home.

https://stepinaac.org/Video_AACatHome



Print all materials from week 14 here:
STEPINAAC.ORG/WB14

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT AND LINKS



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