



Week 15: AAC Outside



AAcTion Steps

StepInAAC.org/A-Week15 (Online / PDF)

Core words: make, up, in
Communication function: Statements, or “tell about”



Sign Posts (videos)

StepInAAC.org/P-Week15 (YouTube playlist)

15-1: Before-During-After

Video: StepInAAC.org/V15-1-BeforeDuringAfter

Handout: StepInAAC.org/H15-1-BeforeDuringAfter

15-2: Why Use Symbols for AAC

Video: StepInAAC.org/V15-2-LWT-WetMessy



Travelog (newsletter)

StepInAAC.org/N-Week15 (Online / PDF)

Topics:

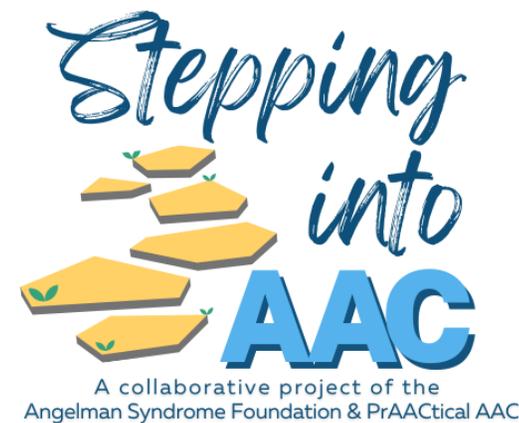
- Cycle of Perception, Expectation, Opportunity & Achievement: Changing the Trajectory of AAC Learning
- Communication Bill of Rights: Treating AAC users with dignity & respect
- More to Explore



Question of the Week: "I can see some growth in my child, but others continue to treat them as if they can't really communicate. How can I change those dynamics?"



This week, let's look for ways to take communication with us when we step outside. It might be sitting on your front step, exploring a park, or going for a short walk. Look for things you can talk about. Listen for sounds. Comment on things you feel, like the breeze or the sunshine. Use your communication board to comment on things you notice and things your learner is noticing. It's a good way to show that words are for outdoors, too!



Hands-on Activities

Day 1

LOOK: Look for favorite critters to talk about. Or point out colors you see. A spider might MAKE a web. Will it catch a bug IN its web?

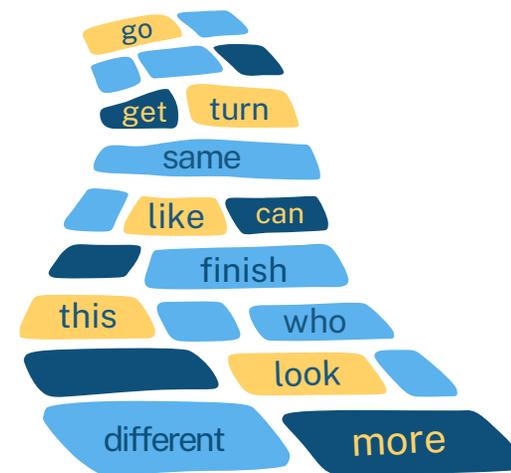
Day 2

POINT: Try a listening game. What do you hear? A bird UP IN a tree? A plane IN the sky? Point to what you hear, and then comment on your board.

make

up

in



Day 3

PLAY: See if you can MAKE something outside. MAKE bubbles. MAKE a circle on the sidewalk with chalk. MAKE a pile of leaves.

Day 4

FIND: Find ways to go UP and down at the park - like a swing or slide. Between turns, pause for a moment and talk about what will happen.

Day 5

SHARE: Invite someone on a walk or to the park with you. Tell them about using words while you explore outdoors.





Seize the Moment: Before-During-After

A collaborative project of the Angelman Syndrome Foundation and PrAACtical AAC

Before-During-After is a strategy the maximizes AAC modeling during some of the most fun activities (when AAC may be justifiably difficult to embed).

Think water play, sledding, or building a sand castle. These are the best times; give your AAC learner opportunities to talk about these exciting, share-worthy experiences.

Before:

Before you venture out, use AAC to talk about:

- where you are going
- what you will do
- what is needed
- who will be there
- how time will be spent
- what it will be like

You may also plan for a paper-based backup AAC



During :

During the outing, activity, or adventure:

- have a great time!
- be "in the moment"
- notice all the ways your learner is communicating with you
- use AAC if you can (but don't stress if you don't)
- take photos...IMPORTANT!



After:

Afterwards, pull up those photos & use AAC:

- talk about your day, using the pictures to help you remember and notice things together
- some of your conversation will likely be similar to your "BEFORE" chat, but there will be differences related to what actually happened
- help your learner tell another about their fun activity or experience.



Before-During-After guides you to model AAC to talk about interesting experiences, multiple times, without the pressure of doing so during the activity!



Links & Attributions

Seize the Moment: Before-During-After



Stepping Into AAC homepage:

stepinaac.org/Welcome



Video :

stepinaac.org/V15-1-BeforeDuringAfter



Handout:

stepinaac.org/H15-1-BeforeDuringAfter



Stepping Into AAC, Week 15 bundle:

stepinaac.org/WB15



AAC Graphics created by:

Drawn to AAC: www.teacherspayteachers.com/Store/Drawn-To-Aac



Inside this Issue

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE COMMUNICATION BILL OF RIGHTS

This week's highlights focus on access to AAC and treating users with dignity and respect.

QUESTION OF THE WEEK

"I see some growth in my child, but others continue to treat them as if they can't really communicate. How can I change those dynamics?"

MORE TO EXPLORE

References, links to videos, resources



CYCLE OF PERCEPTION, EXPECTATION, OPPORTUNITY, & ACHIEVEMENT

Changing the Trajectory of AAC Learning

"Perception drives expectation, expectation drives opportunity, opportunity drives achievement, achievement drives perception".

CONTINUED ON P. 2

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 have access to functioning AAC and other AT (assistive technology) services and devices at all times

Our learner's AAC system is their voice and it should be with them at all times.

Whether it's a communication board or a high-tech device, many families bring up concerns regarding their child's AAC system and access. Some are concerned that the communication board may get lost and are reluctant to send it to school. Some are worried that their child's high-tech AAC device may break if it's taken near the pool or sent with their child to camp. We *always* insist that our families obtain some sort of backup to their child's system in case of loss, a broken device, or a forgotten device charger. Having extra communication boards and/or books that are laminated or printed on durable paper is always a good idea. There are times when the intentions are there, but technology is technology and, inevitably, things happen that are just out of your control. Our learners have the right to access their communication system at all times. It is also imperative to inform your child's AAC team that your child's device is their voice. It should *never* be removed from their immediate vicinity.

Unfortunately, there have been instances where someone takes the device or board as some sort of punishment for the child not following through with a task. This should NEVER be the case.

The right to be treated with dignity and addressed with respect and courtesy

All individuals deserve respect and dignity and our AAC learners are no exception. Having others speak to our learners in a way that they would speak to anyone else of our learner's age is a way of showing that respect.

Continued on page 4.



CYCLE OF PERCEPTION

continued

Perception Drives Expectation

Perception sets the stage for this cycle. How are our learners perceived by those around them? How are they perceived by peers? By staff? By those with the power to make decisions for them? When our learners show up with a communication board or a robust AAC system, do others assume that these options are "too much" or "too overwhelming" for our learners? Do they seek to simplify, reduce, or even remove these forms of communication because they perceive our learners as being "incapable" of using them?

While it is a heartbreaking notion to think about, we have to think about these possibilities in order to get ahead of them. To reach those people before they have the opportunity to create a limiting perception. How can we attempt to get ahead of these situations? One idea would be to send in a "Get to know ___" document which allows teachers, therapists, and support staff to get to know your child, their preferences, AAC system, and above all, their *strengths*.

Get in touch with staff before the school year. Create a positive perception of your child and their strengths so that there is a positive change to the cycle. So that there are higher expectations.

Expectation Drives Opportunity

If you expect that someone cannot do something, will you even bother to provide them with the opportunity to learn or try? Chances are, you probably won't. On the other side of this, if you *expect* that someone can do something, you'll absolutely provide them with the opportunities and support to do so.

We must create a shift in perception to enact a change in expectation, all for the sake of opportunity.

[Learn More on Page 5](#)



QUESTION OF THE WEEK

"I see some growth in my child, but others continue to treat them as if they can't really communicate. How can I change those dynamics?"

You've been modeling for weeks, you ensure that your learner's communication board is accessible at all times, you are constantly looking out for any and all modes or signals of communication. You have put in the work and so has your learner. You are starting to see them engage with the communication board and they may already be using it for communication. You see how far your child has come over the last 14 weeks, but what if others don't notice a change yet?

Share Anecdotes.

Chances are, you will have a collection of stories over the weeks of your child communicating. Whether it's their contextual and 'on-point' usage of their communication board or their head shake to indicate that they don't want something, you'll have many stories to tell! These anecdotes are a great way to share all the ways in which your child is communicating and it gives others a peek into what your child's communication looks like outside of a classroom.

"The funniest thing happened yesterday. Ariyah started saying 'NO' on her communication board and I couldn't figure out why. Initially, I just brushed it off thinking maybe she was just exploring. Then, I turned around and realized that our dog had just finished stealing Ariyah's lunch!"

Provide Examples.

Have you been focusing on a certain core word or communicative function that week? It may be helpful to share some instances where you have made that word a focus and how your learner used that word or function.

"We've been focusing on using the word 'LOOK' to gain attention this week. On our walks, we often see neighbors' pets through the fence, so I'll point them out while pointing to the word 'LOOK' on Jace's communication board. I also point it out whenever someone new walks into the room. I was so impressed when we had a family member visit and Jace communicated 'LOOK' as soon as he walked through the door!"

Continued on page 4.

MORE TO EXPLORE

Thoughts on practice in AAC instruction:

Repetition and structured moments with flashcards are not for everyone. How can we ensure that our learners are getting the ample amount of opportunities and practice without it being boring? Check out this blog post for helpful tips on how to engage our learners in fun and interactive ways.

https://stepinaac.org/AAC_Instruction



HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE COMMUNICATION BILL OF RIGHTS

continued

Dismissing, ignoring, or speaking to our learner in a way that's meant for someone much younger in age is simply not respectful. This week, we discussed the concept of "Perception drives expectation, expectation drives opportunity, opportunity drives achievement, achievement drives perception". If the cashier at the grocery store perceives our learner as being capable of having a quick conversation, they will expect and anticipate a response from them when they ask, "How are you?". If the expectation for an interaction is there, our learner may be more likely to make the communication attempt. Then, maybe the next time they're at the grocery with you, the cashier may present another opportunity for communication and our learner will have some level of achievement with this consistent opportunity. How others speak to and treat our AAC learners matters immensely!

The right to be addressed directly and not be spoken for or talked about in the third person while present

Have you ever been to an appointment with your learner and the professional starts speaking to you about your child as if they're not even in the room? What a devastating feeling for our learner. Even if our learner is not consistent in their communication attempts or responding to questions or pleasantries yet, they should *still* be acknowledged, addressed, included, and informed, especially if decisions regarding their care or daily life are being made.

We will continue to highlight more from the NJC's Communication Bill of Rights over the final weeks of this project. If you need to revisit the Communication Bill of Rights document in its entirety, check out the supplemental materials in Week 12.

“

It was heartbreaking and frustrating [that others felt he didn't have the skills for AAC].

*Kathryn, mother of Stetson, age 9,
Deletion + Angelman Syndrome*

QUESTION OF THE WEEK

continued

Explore "Aha moments".

Admittedly, we cannot always catch every single moment of communication as it's happening. But, we all have some 'aha moments' that are really memorable and are certainly worth sharing.

"You know that we've been working hard on potty training with Jasmyne. Well, you'd be so proud of her! Over the weekend, she pointed to 'BATHROOM' on her communication board. We had just been to the bathroom not too long before, but I always honor whatever she communicates. So I took her to the bathroom, and would you believe that she went *again*?"

Explain other forms of communication.

Over the course of this project, you have learned that there are a multitude of ways our learners can communicate. While you have gotten really good at figuring out what those modalities are for your child, others may not have a keen eye to see them just yet. It would be helpful for you to share some of the ways in which your child communicates so that other people can take notice of them too.

"I've noticed that when Harper pushes things away, she may need to stop and take a break. When she does this, I point to the word 'STOP' on her communication board while saying something like, 'It looks like you might want to STOP for a bit'. This has been really helpful for us at home."

“

*I knew there were things
he had to say, he wanted to say.*

*Dawn, mother of David, age 26,
Deletion + Angelman Syndrome*

Teach Interaction Strategies.

It's possible that other people do not see your child communicating much because they may not know that there are helpful AAC interaction strategies. Maybe they're not giving your learner enough pause time to give them the opportunity to respond or comment. Perhaps they're unknowingly creating more high-pressure communication situations by asking too many questions. Or maybe they're not modeling with your learner at all throughout the day. The best part about having to explain these strategies is that maybe you, too, were just as new to them 15 weeks ago. You can now share these strategies from a place of *knowing and understanding*.

"I've been taught a really helpful strategy when interacting with Enrique. I'm still pretty new to it myself, but I find that he's really responding to it at home! When I speak to him, I point to a word that I've said on his communication device. The 'fancy' word for this is called Aided Language Input, but we also call it 'modeling'. It really helps expose him to the vocabulary on the communication board and I've noticed that he has been using it more as a result. If you have a minute, I can show you how it works!"

These tips are just a few of many that can be used with family members, school staff, and others. As you begin to learn more about AAC and how your child communicates, you'll be able to share more personal stories and tips that work best for your learner.



CYCLE OF PERCEPTION, EXPECTATION, OPPORTUNITY, & ACHIEVEMENT

continued

Opportunity Drives Achievement

Achievement stands on the shoulders of opportunity; in fact, achievement *does not exist* without opportunity. And if there's no achievement, the entire cycle becomes an "I told you so" moment for those who ever believed our learners were capable from the beginning.

If we continue to perceive that our learners cannot or are unable to learn something new, then we are likely not going to give them the opportunity to learn. Think about how crucial the concept of presuming potential is for our learners. For us, if we perceive that we cannot do something (ex: "Oh I could never run a marathon"), then we may miss out on our potential for a new hobby or one-time achievement. But, for our learners, if those meant to support and encourage our learners do not believe they have the potential to accomplish those skills, our learners aren't just missing out on a hobby, they're missing out on pivotal everyday communication. They're missing out on their connection to the world. By not presuming their potential to learn and communicate, we are essentially locking up their thoughts, ideas, needs, wants, hopes, and dreams and we are throwing away the key.

The bottom line is that we (and others) need to see our learners and their strengths through **rose-colored glasses**. We have to take the optimistic view from the very beginning. We have discussed the pitfalls and the ways in which negative perception can collapse any hope of achievement. But, what if everyone saw the potential from the get go? What if there was a resounding "YES!" to trying a robust AAC system? What if, knowing a learner can use the system with the right support, they are given all the tools, support, strategies, and *opportunities* to do so? What if our learners go on to achieve more than just day-to-day communication? What if they thrive? What if...



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT AND LINKS



Stepping into AAC is grateful to the following companies for the use of their core boards:

AssistiveWare, LAMP Words for Life, PRC-Salttillo, Project Core, & Tobii Dynavox.

Graphics were created by Drawn to AAC & LessonPix.

Thanks to UM-NSU CARD & students at Nova Southeastern University for assistance:
Sofia Rodriguez, Brooke Gallo, Lauren Borges, Tomomi Souza, & Naidej Troncoso.

Extra special thanks to all those whose images appear in this issue:
Taylor, Logan, James, Franek, Landree, & Nico.

Article of the Week: Thoughts on Practice in AAC Instruction

https://stepinaac.org/AAC_Instruction



**Print all materials
from week 15 here:
[STEPINAAC.ORG/WB15](https://stepinaac.org/WB15)**