



Week 2: What Does Success Look Like?



AAcTion Steps

StepInAAC.org/A-Week2 (Online / PDF)

Core words: like, not
Communicative Function: Commenting



Sign Posts (videos)

StepInAAC.org/P-Week2 (YouTube playlist)

2-1: Shared Attention: Part 1

Video: StepInAAC.org/V2-1-SharedAttention-1

2-2: Shared Attention: Part 2

Video: StepInAAC.org/V2-2-SharedAttention-2

2-3: Multimodal Communication

Video: StepInAAC.org/V2-3-Multimodal

2-4: Model Language with AAC

Video: StepInAAC.org/V2-4-ModelAAC

Handout: StepInAAC.org/H2-4-ModelAAC

2-5: Language Development is our Guide: Part 1

Video: StepInAAC.org/V2-5-LanguageDevelopment-1

Handout: StepInAAC.org/H-LanguageDevelopment



Travelog (newsletter)

StepInAAC.org/N-Week2 (Online / PDF)

Topics:

- Core Vocabulary for Beginning Communicators
- What does AAC success look like?



Question of the Week: "That's fine for other kids but this learner doesn't seem ready for abstract words."



AAction Steps Week 2

What Does Success Look Like?

Most children learn to talk by hearing everyone around them talk. When speech is not a consistent way to communicate, we can support learners by showing them different ways to communicate. Lots of kids learn to use symbols after adults use those symbols around them. This week, you will show your child how they can comment. As you see their behavior telling you something, you can make a comment on your communication board.



Hands-on Activities

Day 1

FIND: On your communication board, find the words 'LIKE' and 'NOT'. Think about the opinions you could share with those two words.

Day 2

PRACTICE: Think of something you like. Say "I LIKE..." Point to the symbol for 'LIKE' when you say it.

Look for these words on your communication board.

like

not



Day 3

TELL: Listen to music with someone. Tell them if you LIKE or do NOT LIKE the song. Point to those words on the communication board.

Day 4

OBSERVE: Today, look for something your child enjoys. You could say, "You sure LIKE this snack!" and point to the 'LIKE' symbol.

Day 5

SHARE: Tell someone else about how you can comment and share an opinion with these first two words.





Model Language with AAC

A collaborative project of the Angelman Syndrome Foundation and PrAACtical AAC

Language input refers to the language that learners are exposed to when watching us model AAC, or listening to us talk or read aloud.

Aided Language Input, also known as Modeling =
Communication partners use AAC to take their turn in interactions to show how language works...with AAC.

5 AAC Modeling Strategies:

Say What You See

Observe your learner. Notice their emotions or actions. Label it, and tell them what you think they are trying to express; take their perspective to map language to their intent or emotion.

Ex: "You are reaching. I think you want it. Let me help you."

Self-Talk

Tell about what you are doing, thinking & feeling (like on a cooking show).

Ex: I'll make mine yellow. I like yellow.

Comment

Share an opinion or make an observation, to foster a social & fun interaction.

Ex: Look at all that blue, like water. I love it!



Narrate

Describe what someone else is doing or what is happening in the environment (like a sportscaster).

Ex: You are covered in paint!

Describe

Use accessible words to explain, clarify, or tell about an item, activity, concept or experience

Ex: Red & blue can be mixed together to make purple.



Links & Attributions

Model Language with AAC



Stepping Into AAC homepage:
stepinaac.org/Welcome



Video 2-4:
stepinaac.org/V2-4-ModelAAC



Handout:
stepinaac.org/H2-4-ModelAAC



Stepping Into AAC, Week 2 bundle:
stepinaac.org/WB2



Content for this Video & Handout informed and inspired by the work of :
NJC: Communication Bill of Rights

AAC Graphics created by:

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



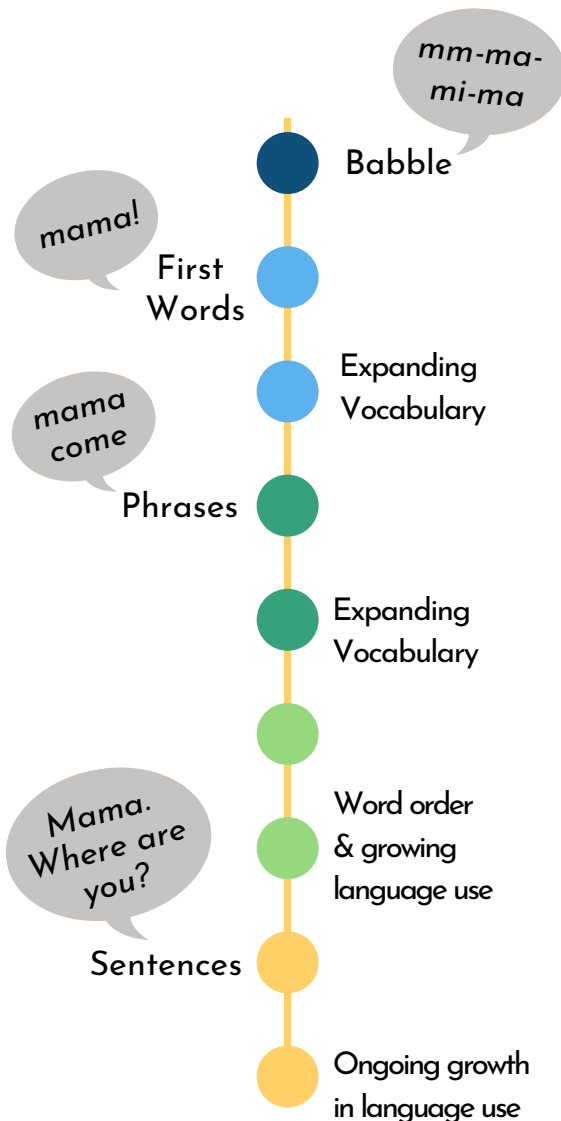
Language Development is Our Guide

A collaborative project of the Angelman Syndrome Foundation and PrAACtical AAC

Language develops in a relatively predictable fashion, regardless of how a person communicates.

Language development occurs in a sequence & under certain conditions for skills to develop.

Language skills generally emerge in a developmental progression:



Language skills grow through rich experiences where communication partners:

1. Use a variety of communicative functions

Engaging with others to request, refuse, comment, be social/connect, share information & ask questions keeps the conversation dynamic, flexible, & interesting. It extends AAC use beyond labeling and making choices.

2. Model Language in everyday routines & activities

All language is learned through modeling, whether natural language development, learning a foreign language, or learning AAC. Naturalistic interactions provide meaningful contexts for learning, and show learners the capacity of their AAC in everyday life.

3. Use Core Words

It is not possible to provide immersive language learning experiences without core words. They pair with high-interest & other fringe words to expand our ability to talk about our world, our experiences, & to "tell our story."

4. Recognize that language learning takes time

Language learning is a long game. Developmental checklists often address skills up to age 5. AAC learning often takes longer. Be patient, & provide ample experiences for your learner to continually grow their AAC know-how.

Companion Handouts for Video 2-5 & 9-1

(stepinaac.org/V2-5-LanguageDevelopment-1 & stepinaac.org/V9-1-LanguageDevelopment-2)



Links & Attributions

Language Development is Our Guide



Stepping Into AAC homepage:
stepinaac.org/Welcome



Video 2-5:
stepinaac.org/V2-5-LanguageDevelopment-1



Video 9-1:
stepinaac.org/V9-1-LanguageDevelopment-2



Handout:
stepinaac.org/H-LanguageDevelopment



Stepping Into AAC, Week 2 bundle:
stepinaac.org/WB2



Stepping Into AAC, Week 9 bundle:
stepinaac.org/WB9





Inside this Issue

AAC SUCCESS

What are some things I can do to help my learner be successful with AAC?

QUESTION OF THE WEEK

"That's fine for other kids but this learner doesn't seem ready for abstract words."

MORE TO EXPLORE

References, links to videos, resources

CORE VOCABULARY

For Beginning Communicators

Last week, we discussed the importance of having access to a robust vocabulary. Did you know that there is a small set of words that make up around 80% of what we say on any given day? These high-frequency words are often called core vocabulary, and they consist of power-packed words including pronouns, verbs, and descriptors. These words are highly versatile in that they can be applied in most contexts. Some examples of core words are 'I', 'you', 'like', 'go', 'more', 'get', 'need', 'help', 'big', 'out', 'off', 'cold', 'wet'.

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AAC SUCCESS

How can I contribute to successful AAC?

Like many things in life, AAC takes a village. Communication is part of human connection and it truly is a driving factor in our world. Everyone communicates, and even those with the most significant disabilities can become more effective communicators. Those of us who use language with ease can facilitate their learning at every interaction.

Our interaction style and strategies as communication partners are key in the overall success of our AAC learners. How can we motivate our learners to share their ideas, feelings, dislikes, and passions? The better question is, how do we open our senses to see what they're already communicating with us?

“

It's a new language for me & it's a new language for Maya.

Deborah, mom of Maya, age 2, Deletion + Angelman Syndrome

Validate communication attempts. Interpret any potential communication as meaningful and intentional and acknowledge it (even if it may look like a mistake). Many times our learners are telling us something relevant but we may not notice it at that exact moment. Or, we may notice their attempt, but we can't really tell what they are trying to say. We've all had experiences where we've finally figured it out days after the interaction happened. If we build the habit of responding to every communicative attempt, our learners grow increasingly motivated to communicate with us, even if things don't go perfectly each time.

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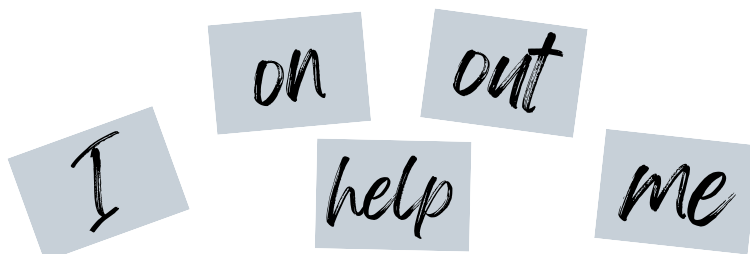
CORE VOCABULARY

continued

Core vocabulary words also provide us with more opportunities to communicate in lots of different ways! Think about the word, "stop", for example. We can use the word "stop" to direct a person's action ("Stop it!"), make a comment or observation ("The car stopped."), make a request ("Can you stop for ___?"), protest ("I need to stop."). "Stop" and think for a minute, how would you communicate without these words?

Fringe vocabulary, on the other hand, refers to an infinite number of words that are primarily made up of nouns and make up about 20% of what we say each day. These words are highly specific and include words such as 'bubbles', 'dress', 'Miss Sandy', and 'notebook'. We'll cover more about fringe vocabulary in next week's newsletter.

A robust AAC vocabulary provides access to *both* core and fringe vocabulary. Core words are the glue that drive longer phrases and help our learners get the most out of their communication, while fringe words add to the richness of their language.



*Continued
on Page 3*



CORE VOCABULARY

continued

Having access to a robust vocabulary allows our learners to have the opportunity to use more words. If we do not provide our AAC learners with a variety of vocabulary, they will miss out on so many chances to communicate. Here are some examples:

Hayes' father reports that he doesn't like chocolate at all and wonders why he would need to have access to that word when it's not something that Hayes eats. He left it in his fringe vocabulary anyways, knowing that it's important for Hayes to have access to a variety of vocabulary. One day, Hayes and his father were reading a book together, when Hayes selected the word "chocolate" from his fringe vocabulary to comment on the character that was eating chocolate cake in the book.

Mila's grandmother is concerned about having some core words present in Mila's communication book because she's worried they may be too "abstract" and doesn't think Mila's ready for them yet. With guidance and encouragement from Mila's speech-language pathologist, Mila's grandmother left access to all of the core vocabulary. One day at the park, Mila began to cry as her grandmother pushed her on the swing. Mila's grandmother gently brought the swing to a stop and presented Mila's core vocabulary board. Mila pointed to the word, "NOT" as a way to say that she did NOT want to swing anymore. Mila's grandmother felt a sense of relief that she had access to those abstract words.

Core vocabulary may seem challenging to incorporate into your daily routines, but once you get some practice, you'll see that their versatility lends itself to being used in any interaction. Can you think about how many core words you might say in a given sentence?



QUESTION OF THE WEEK

"That's fine for other kids but this learner doesn't seem ready for abstract words."

"Can individuals with significant communication challenges, including intellectual disabilities, really learn to use AAC systems with core words?" Yes, they can. Research and our clinical experiences with beginning communicators of various ages has demonstrated that with good support and the proper tools, they can and do learn these words.

The majority of core words are considered to be "abstract" because it's difficult to represent them with a picture. How would you represent words like 'it', 'some', or 'that'? There truly is no concrete way to represent these abstract concepts, but, given the right support and services, our learners have the potential to learn words, even if they're abstract. As our AAC learners gain more exposure to these words over time, they become part of how our learners experience the world.

“

He was using a symbol just to tell you something that you couldn't guess through body language.

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

This doesn't happen right away, of course. It takes a lot of consistent exposure to seeing and hearing these words used along with an AAC system along with opportunities for them to experiment with these words.

Continued on page 4

AAC SUCCESS

continued

Will they use these words inconsistently and incorrectly for the first few months? Possibly. They'll learn through observation, experimentation, trial-and-error, and supportive feedback. And guess what? That's how non-disabled children learn language, too.

Here's another way to look at it. Ignoring communicative attempts reduces the likelihood of another attempt. Responding to each communicative attempt (no matter how imperfect) keeps us connected, builds trust and mutual respect, and increases the likelihood that they will keep trying.

Speak AAC by using AAC. Have you ever tried to learn a foreign language only to find yourself feeling limited by the number of opportunities you have to hear fluent speakers of that language? The same goes for AAC. Immersion into an AAC-rich environment with other communication partners will take our learners far. So, jump right in! Use AAC to select a symbol while you're speaking. For example, you might say, "Let's GO to the park!" (while selecting 'go' on the device or communication board).

Enjoy meaningful interactions together. The most powerful interactions are often those that are unplanned. Many people feel drawn to using AAC only in highly structured activities rather than weaving AAC into natural moments throughout the day. Sometimes, using only this approach can turn communication into a chore for our learners and it tends to garner rote responses rather than their own spontaneous language. Follow your learner's lead and take part in the interactions they enjoy most.

Believe that they can do it. We all do better when we're surrounded by people who believe in us. The notion of presuming potential means that our default assumption is that, given the right supports and services, they will learn what we teach. By presuming their potential to learn to use AAC effectively, we raise our expectations for them and provide these individuals with more challenging learning opportunities. And those challenging learning opportunities paired with the right dose of effective support sets the stage for growing their communication and AAC skills.

Have you tried this week's action steps? You'll start to feel more confident as you start to actually put the core words into practice. In the weeks ahead, you'll learn more about the range of strategies that communication partners can use to support AAC learning and how to begin using them.



QUESTION OF THE WEEK

"That's fine for other kids but this learner doesn't seem ready for abstract words."

continued

If we postpone using and teaching more abstract words (like 'different,' 'who,' and 'that') until we think they are ready, we're pushing away a lot of important learning opportunities. Instead, we use those words, showing how we say them with AAC during everyday interactions in order to get children on the path to learning. Just like parents of a tiny baby use these words when they talk to their infant (e.g., "WHO came home? Mommy!" "THAT is pretty stinky, isn't it?" "Let's get a DIFFERENT one"), we know that learning language takes time and the sooner we start, the quicker the learning will occur.

We can best support their understanding of these abstract words by increasing their exposure to them by providing frequent opportunities to see and use them in meaningful ways. These words are most important to teach *because they are abstract*.



MORE TO EXPLORE

Who can learn to use abstract symbols and core vocabulary? Drs. Mary Ann Ronski (an SLP) and Rose Sevcik (a psychologist) showed us that youngsters with significant challenges can learn to use AAC tools with abstract words and symbols. They studied these children over time and wrote about it in the book *Breaking the Speech Barrier: Language Development Through Augmented Means*.

Check it out here: <https://stepinaac.org/LangDev>

Can children with significant intellectual challenges and multiple disabilities learn to express themselves with AAC? Yes! Here's an example of a study that demonstrated their capabilities to do just after only 5 weeks of therapy.

Take a look: <https://stepinaac.org/MultipleDisabilities>

How does the ability to speak (even just a little) distinguish students with significant cognitive disabilities from their peers who need AAC? In this article, Dr. Kathy Howery explains a research study on this topic conducted by Drs. Karen Erickson and Lori Geist at the Center for Literacy and Disability Studies.

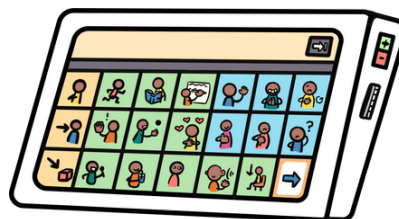
View it here: <https://stepinaac.org/StudentProfiles>



STEPPING INTO AAC: TARGET WORDS

Now that you've learned more about core vocabulary, let's put those words into practice! Here's a look at the target core vocabulary words that will be covered throughout the 20 weeks.

Week	Core Words	Week	Core Words
1	-	11	help, open, more
2	like, not	12	I, can, some
3	good, different	13	all, turn, this
4	look, go, me	14	it, same
5	want, stop, more	15	make, up, in
6	-	16	you, need, here
7	-	17	when, put, on
8	-	18	where, do, over
9	finish, that, get	19	she, he, they
10	who, what	20	-



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:

Davis , Isa , James, Franek & Tyler.

PrAACtical Research: Profiles of Students with
Significant Cognitive Disabilities

<https://stepinaac.org/StudentProfiles>



Research Tuesday: Supporting Children with Severe
and Profound Multiple Disabilities

<https://stepinaac.org/MultipleDisabilities>



Breaking the Speech Barrier:
Language Development Through Augmented Means

<https://stepinaac.org/LangDev>



**Print all materials
from week 2 here:
[STEPINAAC.ORG/WB2](https://stepinaac.org/WB2)**