Playing With a Child Who Uses AAC

-A Parent Handout-

Ashley Egger, MS, CCC-SLP

Playing With a Child Who Uses AAC
Strategies for Developing Speech and Language Skills

There are many different types of Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) systems. Every system is put into place for the purpose of providing a means of communication and to develop expressive language skills. Current research supports the use of AAC systems and says that it does not interfere, yet enhances actual speech production.

Modeling-
One of the most important and critical strategies to remember is to model for your child how to use the AAC system. So take some time and get familiar and comfortable with the new system. A child who is learning how to talk, as well as a child who is learning how to talk with an AAC system, both learn the same way and it's through imitation. This means you have to provide a model, while playing with your child, so your child can imitate it and learn how to navigate the system, sequence steps, and effectively use AAC. When you are playing, have fun and model short phrases. After you provide a model, wait for a few seconds and give your child an opportunity to imitate what you modeled. If they don't spontaneously imitate the model, gently prompt them to try or model the same phrase again. Repeated exposure and practice will significantly increase their level of success when learning how to use an AAC system.

Core Language-
Try to think less about nouns, verbs and words that describe things. Although these words are important, you will have even greater success when you teach them core vocabulary. These are the words that can be used in nearly every situation. These words tend to be a little more abstract, so provide a lot of exposure, practice, and meaningful teaching. Get started by teaching and modeling the following words. Choose around 10 words to focus on each month.

• It	• This	• No	• Let's	• Away
• Do	• That	• Yes	• Play	• Again
• Go	• There	• All	• Find	• Put
• I	• More	• None	• Open	• And
• Me	• Done	• Make	• Turn	• But
• My	• Don't	• Come	• Like	• Goo
• You	• Not	• Look	• Need	• Bad
• He	• Give	• Mine	• Help	• In
• She	• Here	• We	• Stop	• Out
• Up	• Down	• Your	• On	• Off

Tips and Tricks

1. **Have the AAC system accessible-** Your child will have the most success learning an AAC system if it is always available and accessible. If it's a system that needs charged, try and do it at times when the child wont be using their AAC system (e.g. bed time).

2. **Babbling-** While playing, maybe let your child "babble" with the AAC system for the first few minutes before you begin providing models. This allows the child to independently explore and discover the words on the AAC system. If the words seem random, it's ok. It's part of the learning process. Go ahead and acknowledge what they said and try to draw meaning to it.

3. **Reduce Questions-** Direct questions can put unnecessary pressure on children and cause them to not perform/respond. Instead of asking, "Can you say, Give me the ball?" provide the model, wait, and look at them with an expectant look on your face which shows them you can't wait to hear what they have to say.

4. **Be excited-** Show enthusiasm, excitement and encourage other people to use the AAC system in meaningful ways. This will build a positive association with the new system and motivate your child to learn how to use it.

Receptive Language-
Children learn many valuable skills during play and this is also the perfect time to teach them new words. Before you start playing, choose a few words that you will use several times and in different ways and this will help teach the meaning of the word. Asking children to "show you" where certain words are located on the AAC system will not promote better word understanding.

Play Skills-
Make learning fun and disguise it through play. When children are playing, they will be more motivated to try new things. Make sure to create opportunities while playing for your child to use the AAC system. When you provide models in fun and natural ways, the child will be more successful when learning the new system. It is incredibly important to praise and reinforce any and all responses the child may be attempting to make on the AAC system, even if it's not exactly right. You can always provide the model again and gently show them the correct way of using and combining those words.

Playing With a Child Who Uses AAC
Strategies for Developing Speech and Language Skills

There are many different types of Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) systems. Every system is put into place for the purpose of providing a means of communication and to develop expressive language skills. Current research supports the use of AAC systems and says that it does not interfere, yet enhances actual speech production.

Modeling-
One of the most important and critical strategies to remember is to model for your child how to use the AAC system. So take some time and get familiar and comfortable with the new system. A child who is learning how to talk, as well as a child who is learning how to talk with an AAC system, both learn the same way and it's through imitation. This means you have to provide a model, while playing with your child, so your child can imitate it and learn how to navigate the system, sequence steps, and effectively use AAC. When you are playing, have fun and model short phrases. After you provide a model, wait for a few seconds and give your child an opportunity to imitate what you modeled. If they don't spontaneously imitate the model, gently prompt them to try or model the same phrase again. Repeated exposure and practice will significantly increase their level of success when learning how to use an AAC system.

Core Language-
Try to think less about nouns, verbs and words that describe things. Although these words are important, you will have even greater success when you teach them core vocabulary. These are the words that can be used in nearly every situation. These words tend to be a little more abstract, so provide a lot of exposure, practice, and meaningful teaching. Get started by teaching and modeling the following words. Choose around 10 words to focus on each month.

- It
- Do
- Go
- I
- Me
- My
- You
- He
- She
- Up
- This
- That
- There
- More
- Done
- Don't
- Not
- Give
- Here
- Down
- No
- Yes
- All
- None
- Make
- Come
- Look
- Mine
- We
- Your
- Let's
- Play
- Find
- Open
- Turn
- Like
- Need
- Help
- Stop
- On
- Away
- Again
- Put
- And
- But
- Goo
- Bad
- In
- Out
- Off

Tips and Tricks

1. **Have the AAC system accessible-** Your child will have the most success learning an AAC system if it is always available and accessible. If it's a system that needs charged, try and do it at times when the child wont be using their AAC system (e.g. bed time).
2. **Babbling-** While playing, maybe let your child "babble" with the AAC system for the first few minutes before you begin providing models. This allows the child to independently explore and discover the words on the AAC system. If the words seem random, it's ok. It's part of the learning process. Go ahead and acknowledge what they said and try to draw meaning to it.
3. **Reduce Questions-** Direct questions can put unnecessary pressure on children and cause them to not perform/respond. Instead of asking, "Can you say, Give me the ball?" provide the model, wait, and look at them with an expectant look on your face which shows them you can't wait to hear what they have to say.
4. **Be excited-** Show enthusiasm, excitement and encourage other people to use the AAC system in meaningful ways. This will build a positive association with the new system and motivate your child to learn how to use it.

Receptive Language-
Children learn many valuable skills during play and this is also the perfect time to teach them new words. Before you start playing, choose a few words that you will use several times and in different ways and this will help teach the meaning of the word. Asking children to "show you" where certain words are located on the AAC system will not promote better word understanding.

Play Skills-
Make learning fun and disguise it through play. When children are playing, they will be more motivated to try new things. Make sure to create opportunities while playing for your child to use the AAC system.

When you provide models in fun and natural ways, the child will be more successful when learning the new system. It is incredibly important to praise and reinforce any and all responses the child may be attempting to make on the AAC system, even if it's not exactly right. You can always provide the model again and gently show them the correct way of using and combining those words.

font & paper by:

INSTRUCT &
inspire

a PERFECT
blend

I'm Lovin' Lit

ASHLEY
AE
EGGER

Ashley Egger, MS, CCC-SLP