# Good Communication

**AAC for Connection, Choice, & Control**

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Emergent literacy consultant, focusing on students with severe disabilities and complex communication needs

Mom to Maggie, age 16

# This session is all about tools and strategies to help our students:

Be known as unique individuals

Connect with others

Have choice and control over their own lives

# Some terms:

**Conventional:** can communicate with symbols with anyone who speaks their language

**Early conventional:** can communicate with symbols with familiar partners

**Emergent:** is learning and exploring how to express ideas with symbols, inconsistently and often without accuracy

**Early emergent:** is learning and observing that symbols and AAC carry meaning and can express ideas

**Robust AAC:** a system that contains a large number of symbols that can be flexibly combined to express a wide range of communication functions

# Poll # 1

The students you work with, are they:

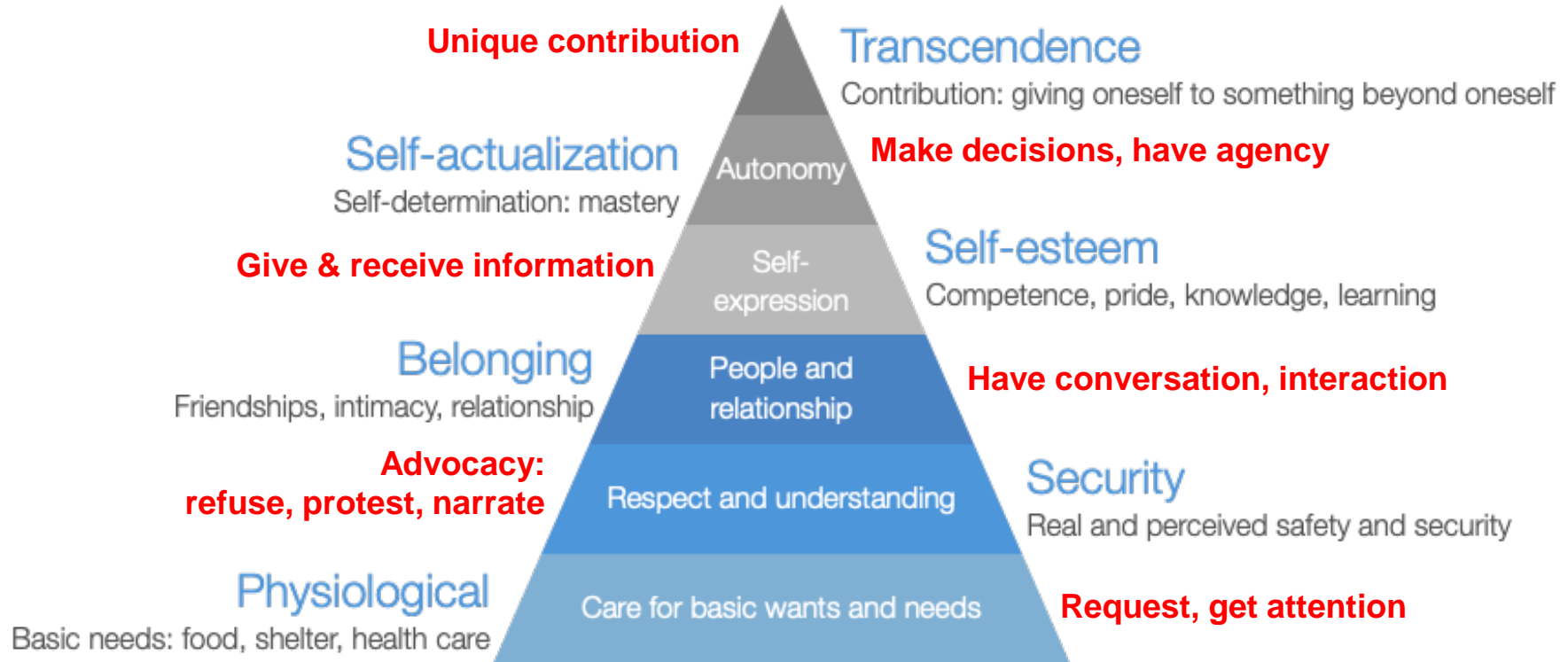primarily **emergent**, or

primarily **conventional**, or

a strong mix of **both**?

# What is the ultimate purpose of communication?
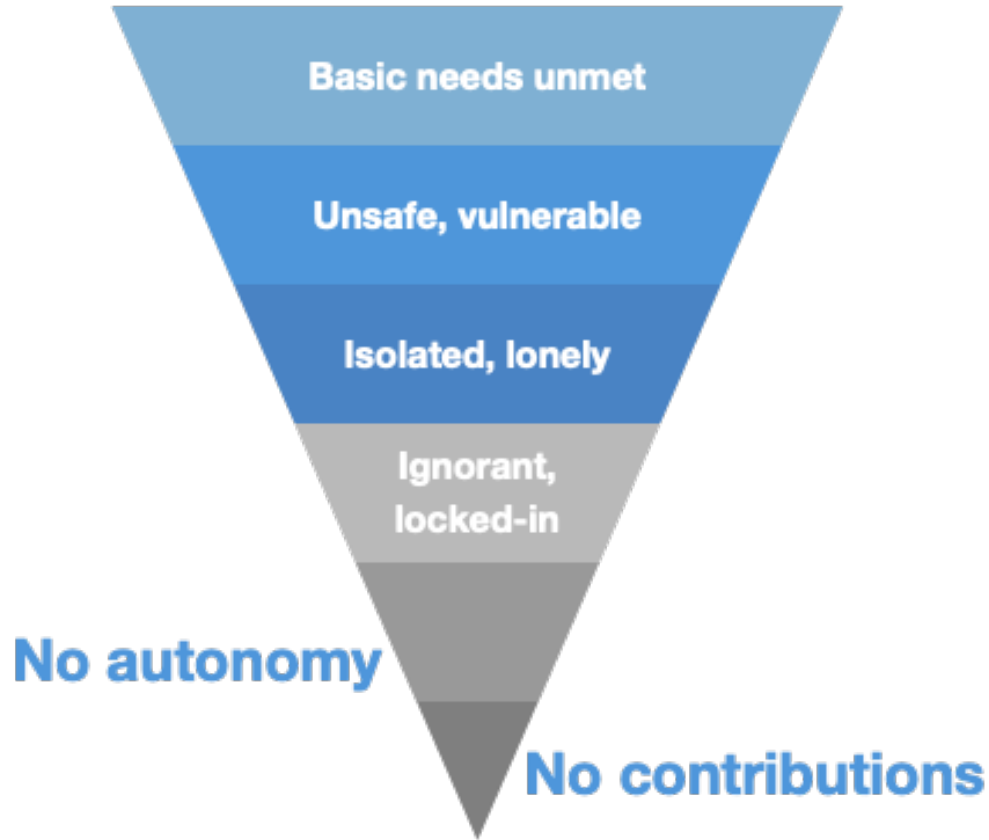
# Maslow's Hierarchy of needs



**Transcendence**
Contribution: giving oneself to something beyond oneself

**Self-actualization**
Self-determination: mastery

Autonomy

Self-expression

**Self-esteem**
Competence, pride, knowledge, learning

**Belonging**
Friendships, intimacy, relationship

People and relationship

Respect and understanding

**Security**
Real and perceived safety and security

**Physiological**
Basic needs: food, shelter, health care

Care for basic wants and needs

# Maslow's Hierarchy & communication functions



**Unique contribution**

Transcendence
Contribution: giving oneself to something beyond oneself

**Make decisions, have agency**

Self-actualization
Self-determination: mastery

Autonomy

Self-esteem
Competence, pride, knowledge, learning

**Give & receive information**

Self-expression

Belonging
Friendships, intimacy, relationship

People and relationship

**Have conversation, interaction**

**Advocacy: refuse, protest, narrate**

Respect and understanding

Security
Real and perceived safety and security

Physiological
Basic needs: food, shelter, health care

Care for basic wants and needs

**Request, get attention**

# What are the outcomes we don't want for our students?

# The reverse of Maslow's Hierarchy

How can we plan for these best communication outcomes, & safeguard against the negative ones?

# Tool to plan for communication over the LifeCourse

## CHARTING the LifeCourse

### Life Trajectory Worksheet: Family

Everyone wants a good life. The bubbles on the right will help you think about what a good life means for you or your family member. In identifying what you want, you don't want, you can use the space around the arrows to think about future needed life experiences that help point you in the direction of your good life.

### VISION for a GOOD LIFE

### What I DON'T Want

# Plan for communication over the LifeCourse

## Life Stages and Life Domains

**Meaningful Day & Employment:**
What you do as part of everyday life– school, employment, volunteering, communication, routines, life skills.

**Community Living**
Where and how you live– housing and living options, community access, transportation, home modifications.

**Safety & Security**
Staying safe and secure– emergencies, well-being, guardianship options, legal rights and issues.

**Healthy Living**
Managing and accessing health care and staying well– medical, mental health, behavior, developmental, wellness and nutrition.

**Social & Spirituality**
Building friendships and relationships, leisure activities, personal networks, faith community.
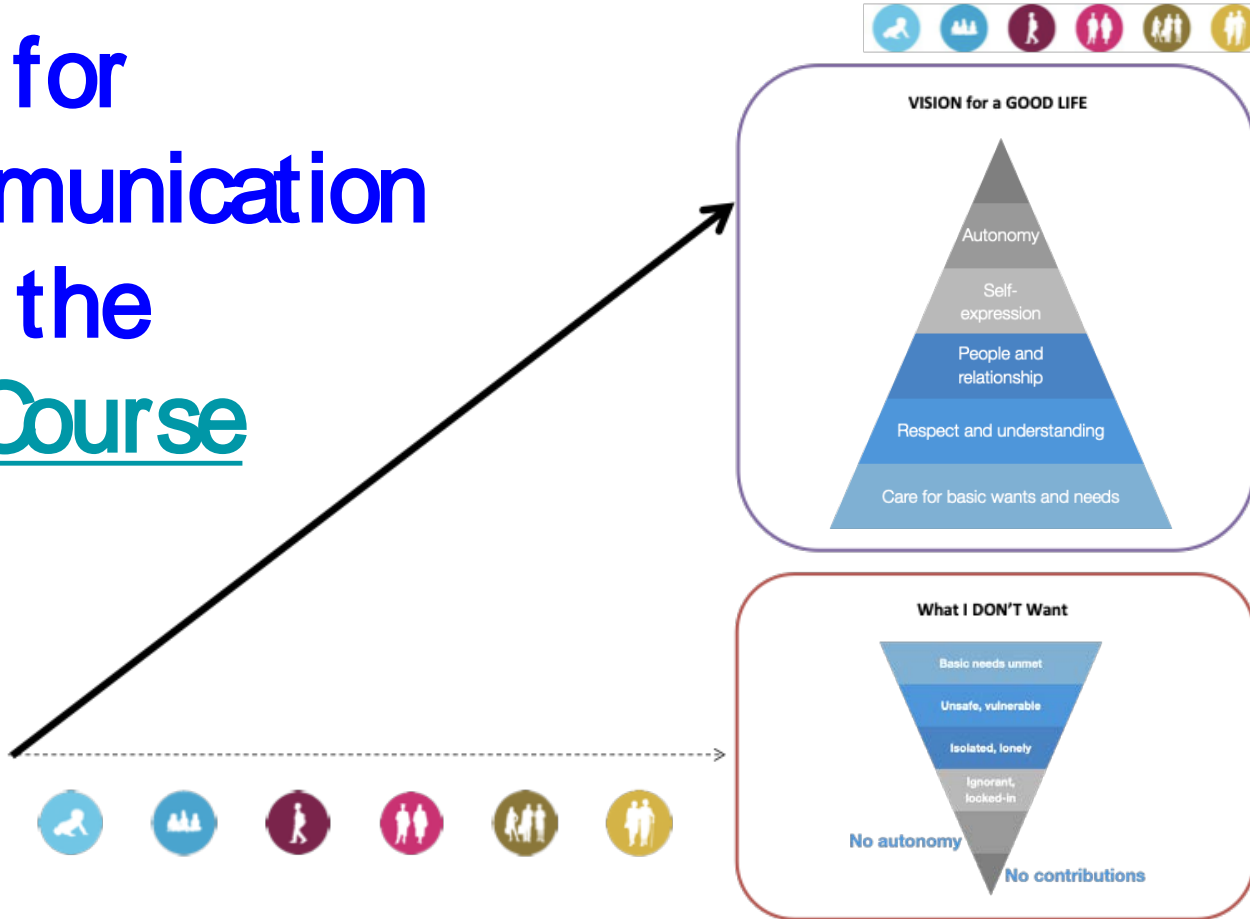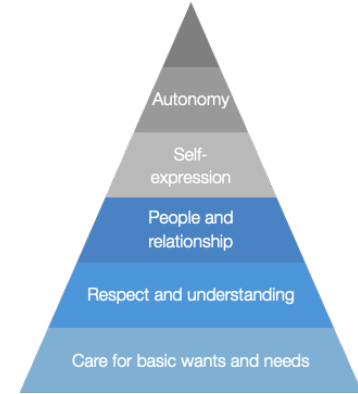
**Citizenship & Advocacy**
Building valued roles, making choices, setting goals, assuming responsibility and driving how one's own life is lived.

# Plan for communication over the [LifeCourse](lifecoursetools.com)



VISION for a GOOD LIFE

- Autonomy
- Self-expression
- People and relationship
- Respect and understanding
- Care for basic wants and needs

What I DON'T Want

- Basic needs unmet
- Unsafe, vulnerable
- Isolated, lonely
- Ignorant, locked-in

No autonomy    No contributions

CHARTING the LifeCourse

**Life Trajectory Worksheet: Family**

Everyone wants a good life. The bubbles on the right will help you think about what a good life means for you or your family member, and identifying what you know you don't want. You can use the space around the arrows to think about current or needed life experiences that help point you in the direction of your good life.

**The role of services**

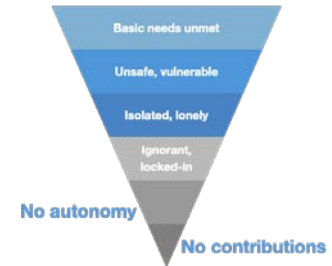(e.g. public education, special education, speech therapy)

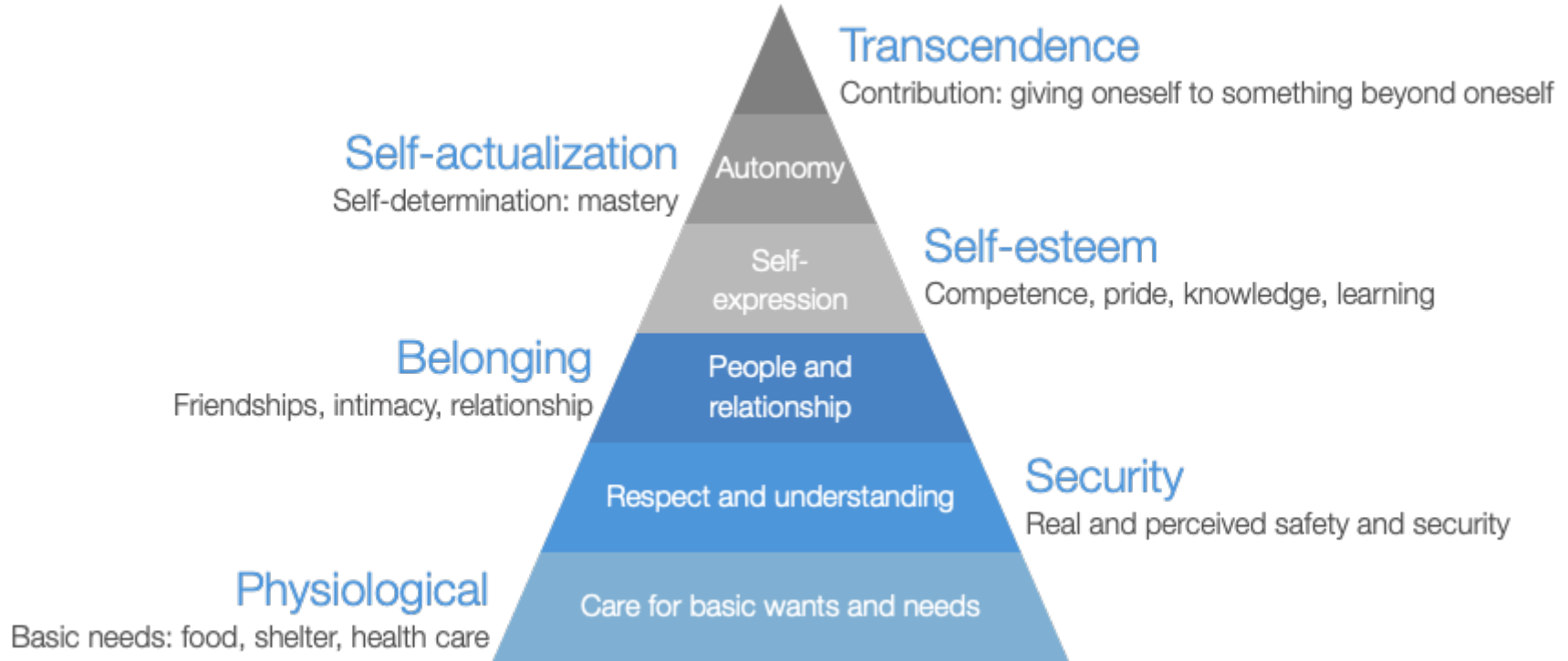Support good outcomes

Prevent bad outcomes

**VISION for a GOOD LIFE**

- Autonomy
- Self-expression
- People and relationship
- Respect and understanding
- Care for basic wants and needs

**What I DON'T Want**

- Basic needs unmet
- Unsafe, vulnerable
- Isolated, lonely
- Ignorant, locked-in

No autonomy        No contributions

Developed by the UMKC Institute for Human Development, UCEDD. More materials at lifecoursetools.com

May 2016

Knowing our students as unique individuals starts with discovering what is important to them and their families.

Functional communication
vs the function of communication

# What does the student and family imagine?

# What makes that student and family unique over the LifeCourse?

## Life Stages and Life Domains

**Meaningful Day & Employment:**
What you do as part of everyday life– school, employment, volunteering, communication, routines, life skills.

**Community Living**
Where and how you live– housing and living options, community access, transportation, home modifications.

**Safety & Security**
Staying safe and secure– emergencies, well-being, guardianship options, legal rights and issues.

**Healthy Living**
Managing and accessing health care and staying well– medical, mental health, behavior, developmental, wellness and nutrition.

**Social & Spirituality**
Building friendships and relationships, leisure activities, personal networks, faith community.

**Citizenship & Advocacy**
Building valued roles, making choices, setting goals, assuming responsibility and driving how one's own life is lived.

What is the communication that allows the student and family to be their unique selves?

Focus on communication functions first: why are we communicating?

# Tool to discover how the student communicates: Communication chart (e.g., gesture dictionary)

| When this is happening: | And Maggie does this: | We think it means: | And you should: |
|---|---|---|---|
| Any classroom activity | Makes a happy sucking sound through her teeth | She is thoroughly engaged in what is happening. | Video record whatever is happening. Model AAC afterwards if she seems irritated by it in the moment. |
| At the start of class | Hovers on the threshold, refuses to enter | She is stressed by the physical environment | Dim the lights, wait for the room to quiet. Use PAS of her Something's Wrong folder to identify the issue. |
| Anytime | Flicks her fingers repeatedly across her lips | She has questions that are causing anxiety | Use PAS of her Questions folder in her AAC. |
| Anytime | Whacks the back of her hand repeatedly under her chin | She is deeply anxious and is on the verge of a meltdown | Reassure her in a very calm voice that she is safe, everything is OK, and where her people are. |

# Tool to discover how the student communicates:

The Pragmatics Profile for People who use AAC

## Appendix 1: Methods of communication chart

*FO = Understood by familiar only
All = Understood by all

| | | Uses AAC resource: single words | Uses AAC resource: sentence or phrase | Eye pointing, eye contact | | Body movement | | Vocalisation, sound, word or word approximation | | Sign | | Gesture | | Facial expression | | Other |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | FO* | ALL | FO | ALL | FO | ALL | FO | ALL | FO | ALL | FO | ALL | |
| **1** | **Context and motivation** | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 1.1 | Shows likes | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 1.2 | Shows dislikes | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| **2** | **Gaining attention** | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 2.1 | Interest in interaction | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 2.4 | Gaining attention to prepare for an interaction | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| **3** | **Drawing attention** | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 3.1 | … to self | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 3.2 | … to an event or action | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 3.3 | … to an object | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 3.4 | … to other people | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| **4** | **Requesting** | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 4.1 | … a person | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 4.2 | … recurrence | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 4.3 | … cessation | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 4.4 | … assistance | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 4.5 | … an object | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 4.6 | Response to direct request for action | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 4.7 | … an event or action | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 4.8 | … information | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 4.9 | Responding to a request for information | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 4.10 | … confirmation of information | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

# Tool to brainstorm and plan

## REASONS we communicate

Use this poster to plan communication goals and activities for AAC users.
Which of these communication functions is your AAC user already using? Which do you want to teach next? And what words and messages can you model to teach these different reasons to communicate?

Learn more about communication functions or download this poster:
www.assistiveware.com/communicationfunctions

### Plan for different communication functions

| Communication Function | Core words to model | Core words with fringe to model |
|---|---|---|
| Request | want, want that, want different, want more, I want | Want play<br>I want to watch TV |
| Protest | not, not that, stop | Not red<br>Stop that music |
| Comment | look, look that, see, see them | I see car<br>That girl looks pretty |
| Direct | get, get it, give me, put in, put it in, give me that | Do more swinging<br>Give me my cup please |

### Getting and giving information

- ☐ Comment
- ☐ Direct
- ☐ Express feelings
- ☐ Ask questions
- ☐ Discuss
- ☐ Give opinions
- ☐ Describe
- ☐ Share news
- ☐ Tell a story
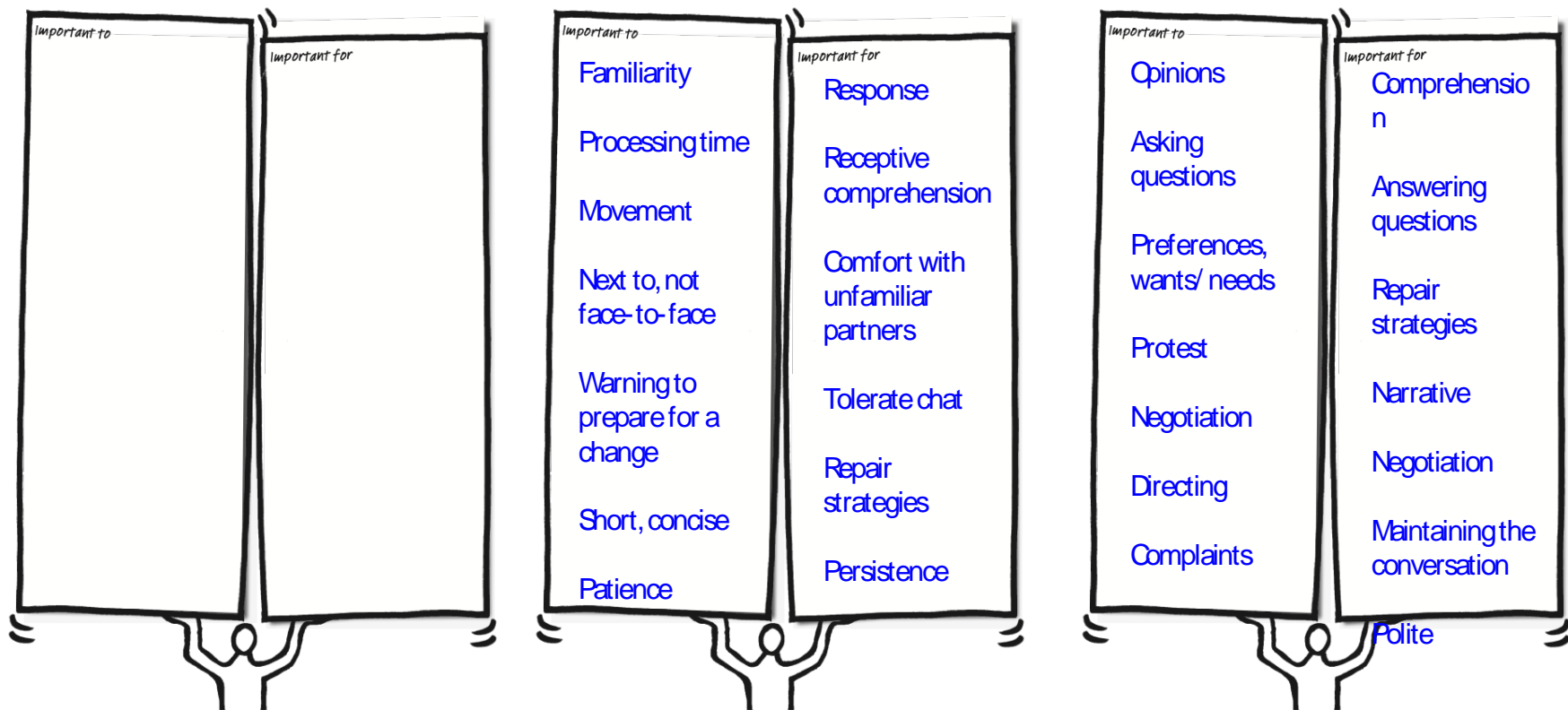- ☐ Tell an imaginary story
- ☐ Plan
- ☐ Explain

### Social Interaction

- ☐ Greet
- ☐ Be polite
- ☐ Flirt or compliment
- ☐ Start a conversation
- ☐ Set topic
- ☐ Direct a conversation
- ☐ Change topic
- ☐ Ask social questions
- ☐ Share about self
- ☐ Wrap up a conversation
- ☐ Tease or joke
- ☐ Negotiate

### Strategies to be better understood

- ☐ Clarify
- ☐ Ask to clarify
- ☐ Say it differently
- ☐ Give a clue
- ☐ Describe
- ☐ Use the alphabet

### Expressing Needs and Wants

- ☐ Make choices
- ☐ Get attention
- ☑ Request
- ☐ Refuse
- ☐ Protest

# Tools to discover what is important

**Important to**

**Important for**

**Important to**

- Familiarity
- Processing time
- Movement
- Next to, not face-to-face
- Warning to prepare for a change
- Short, concise
- Patience

**Important for**

- Response
- Receptive comprehension
- Comfort with unfamiliar partners
- Tolerate chat
- Repair strategies
- Persistence

**Important to**

- Opinions
- Asking questions
- Preferences, wants/ needs
- Protest
- Negotiation
- Directing
- Complaints

**Important for**

- Comprehension
- Answering questions
- Repair strategies
- Narrative
- Negotiation
- Maintaining the conversation
- Polite

# Important TO Maggie    Important FOR Maggie

Share dislikes

Getting your attention

Sharing my opinion

Rejecting

Refusing

Protesting

Negotiating

Asking questions

Share likes

Repairing misunderstanding

Requesting

Social interaction

Directing your attention

Commenting

Maintaining an interaction

Setting the topic

Changing the topic

Chat/small talk

Polite talk/etiquette

Giving partner feedback

Sharing information

# Important TO Maggie

# Important FOR Maggie

Share dislikes

Getting your attention

Sharing my opinion

Social interaction

Directing your attention

Chat/small talk

Polite talk/etiquette

Commenting

Share likes

Refusing

Requesting

Repairing misunderstanding

Giving partner feedback

Sharing information

Protesting

Asking questions

Maintaining an interaction

Negotiating

Rejecting

Changing the topic

Setting the topic

# Important NOW

# Important FUTURE

# Important TO (name)    Important FOR (name)

Share dislikes
Chat/small talk
Sharing my opinion
Maintaining an interaction
Rejecting
Directing someone's attention
etiquette
Protesting
Requesting
Getting the topic
Negotiating
Changing the topic
Giving partner feedback
Repairing misunderstanding

# Important TO (name)

# Important FOR (name)

# Important NOW

Setting the topic
Changing the topic
Refusing a misunderstanding
Giving/requesting feedback
Social/communication
Share dislikes
Choosing a talk
Directing your attention
Sharing my opinion
Negotiating
Maintaining interaction
Requesting attention
Apologies
Polite talk/etiquette

# Important FUTURE

# Tools to discover what is happening and working

**Perfect Week**

|  | Mornings | Afternoons | Evening |
|---|---|---|---|
| Mon |  |  |  |
| Tues |  |  |  |
| Wed |  |  |  |
| Thurs |  |  |  |
| Fri |  |  |  |
| Sat |  |  |  |
| Sun |  |  |  |

| What's working? | What's not working? |
|---|---|
| the person |  |
| family |  |
| staff |  |

What needs to happen next to build on what's working and change what's not working?

# What is working for Maggie

Sharing my opinion

Rejecting

Refusing

Protesting

Share dislikes

Getting your attention

Share likes

Requesting

Social interaction

Commenting

Setting the topic

Negotiating

Directing your attention

# What is not working for Maggie

Chat/small talk

Polite talk/etiquette

Giving partner feedback

Sharing information

Maintaining an interaction

Changing the topic

Asking questions

Repairing misunderstanding

# What is working [name]

Sharing my opinion

Rejecting

Refusing

Protesting

Share dislikes

Getting your attention

Share likes

Requesting

Social interaction

Commenting

Setting the topic

Negotiating

Directing your attention

# What is not working for [name]

Chat/small talk

Polite talk/etiquette

Giving partner feedback

Sharing information

Maintaining an interaction

Changing the topic

Asking questions

Repairing misunderstanding

What is working for your students and their families?


What communication needs are being met, and which ones are unmet?

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# Tool to brainstorm and plan

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| Comment | look, look that, see, see them | I see car<br>That girl looks pretty |
| Direct | get, get it, give me, put in, put it in, give me that | Do more swinging<br>Give me my cup please |

## Getting and giving information

- ☐ Comment
- ☐ Direct
- ☐ Express feelings
- ☐ Ask questions
- ☐ Discuss
- ☐ Give opinions
- ☐ Describe
- ☐ Share news
- ☐ Tell a story
- ☐ Tell an imaginary story
- ☐ Plan
- ☐ Explain

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## Expressing Needs and Wants

- ☐ Make choices
- ☐ Get attention
- ☑ Request
- ☐ Refuse
- ☐ Protest

# Poll #2

How many of your **emergent** students have AAC that can express all these communication functions?

None/few

Many

Most/all

# How do we know what to prioritize?

The most **important** communication needs that are currently **unmet**.

# Important, working

Share likes     Share dislikes     Protesting

Getting your attention     Requesting     Rejecting

Sharing my opinion     Refusing

# Not important now, working

Setting the topic

Negotiating     Giving partner feedback

Commenting     Maintaining an interaction

Asking questions     Directing your attention

Changing the topic     Sharing information     Polite talk/etiquette

Social interaction     Repairing misunderstanding     Chat/small talk

# Important, not working

# Not important now, not working

# What about other AAC competencies?

What other competency needs are being met, and which ones are unmet?

# Important TO Maggie     Important FOR Maggie

Share dislikes

Getting your attention

Social interaction

Chat/small talk

Polite talk/etiquette

Sharing my opinion

Directing your attention

Giving partner feedback

Linguistic: **receptive** vocabulary

Rejecting

Commenting

Sharing information

Refusing

Maintaining an interaction

Social-emotional: **expressing feelings**

Protesting

Setting the topic

Negotiating

Changing the topic

Asking questions

Operational demands of her AAC: **partner-assisted**

Share likes

Social-emotional: **self-regulation**

Repairing misunderstanding

Social-emotional: **self-efficacy**

Operational demands of her AAC: **Independent**

Requesting

Linguistic: **expressive** vocabulary

Linguistic: **grammar**

# Important, working

# Not important now, working

Getting your att...    Setting the topic

Negotiat...   Changi...   Repairing misunderstanding

Sharing m...

Maintaining an interaction

A...   Share dislikes

Social stimgrammarself-regulation
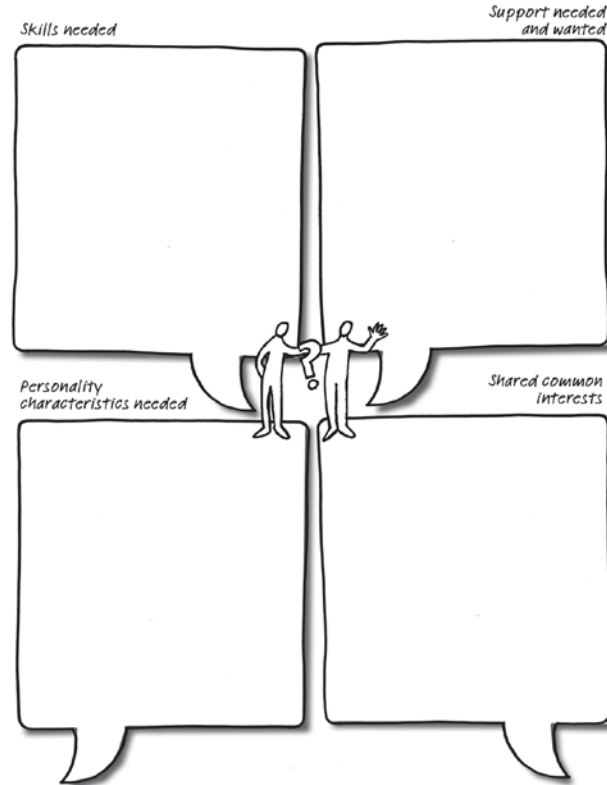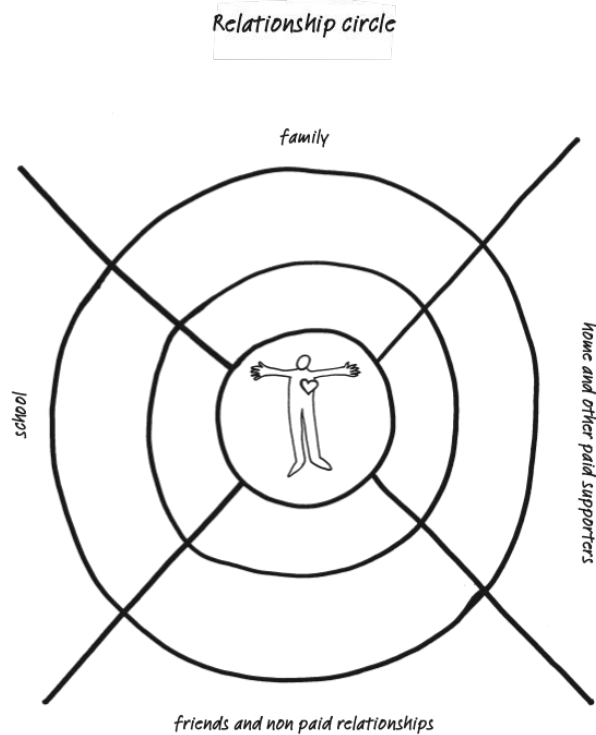Social emotional expself-efficacyeelings
Linguistic: expressive vocabulary AAC:
Linguistic: expressive vocabulary
partner-assisted

# Important, not working

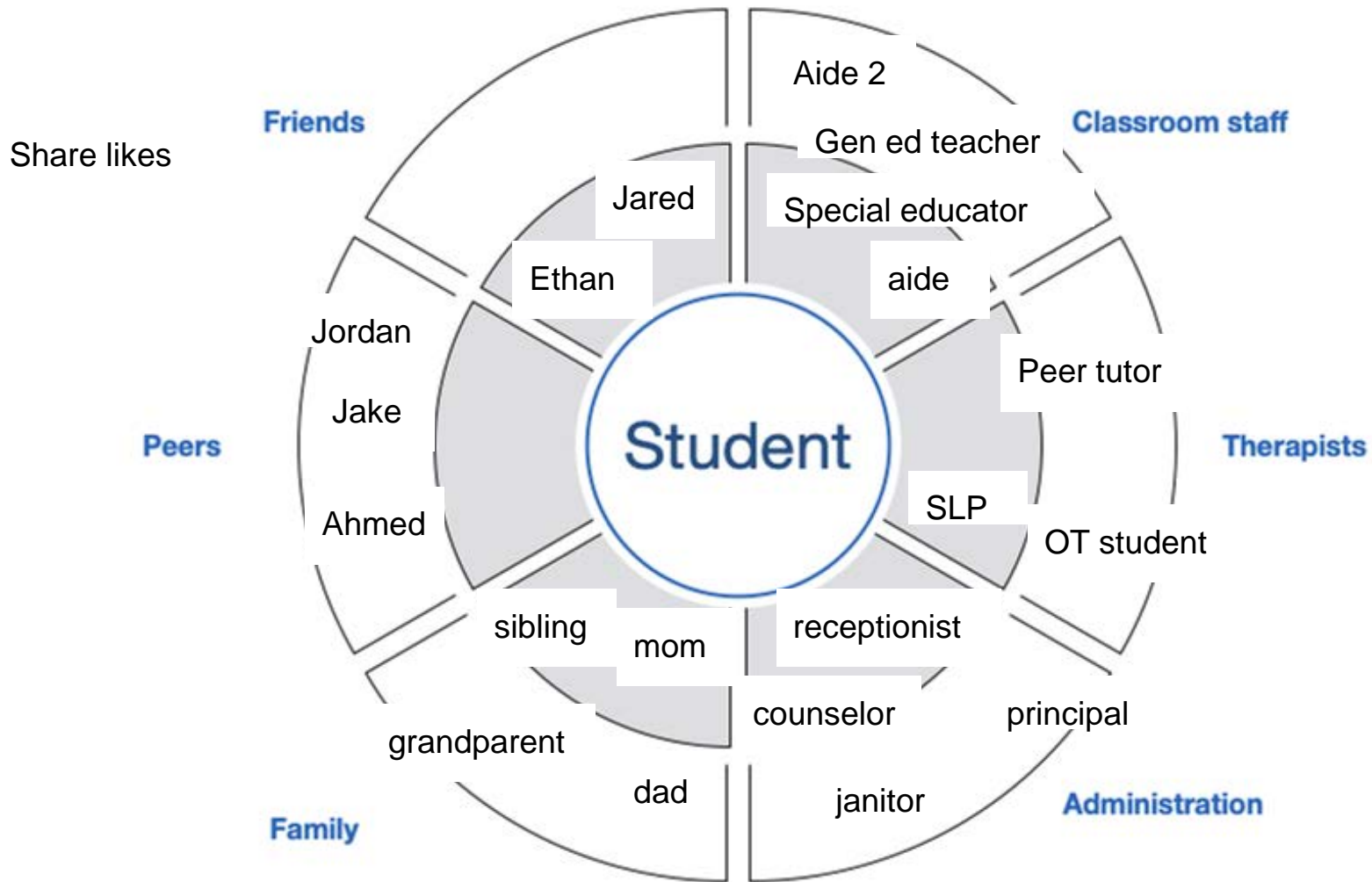# Not important now, not working

# How do we work on ALL of this?

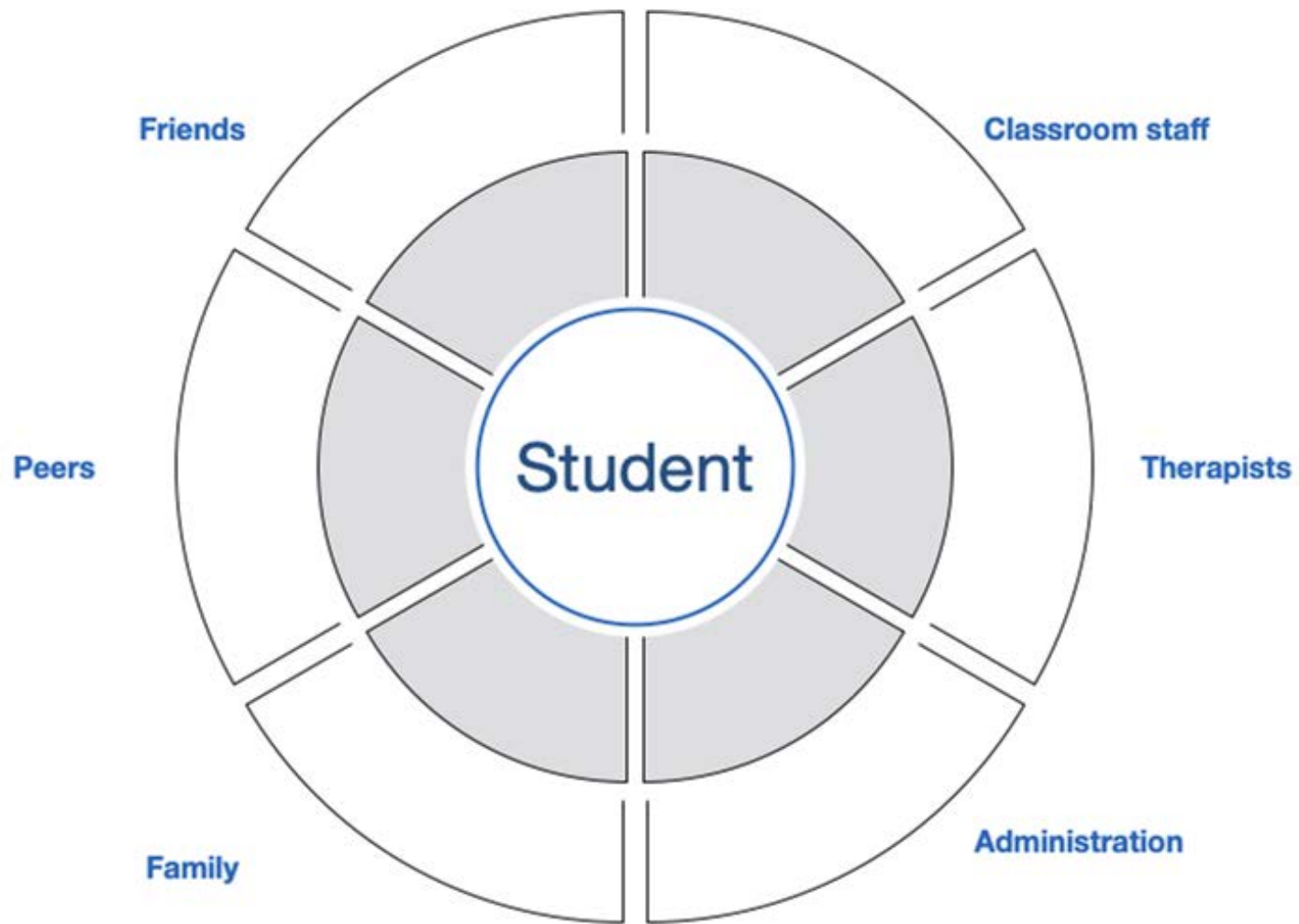Communication across the day, with all possible communication partners.
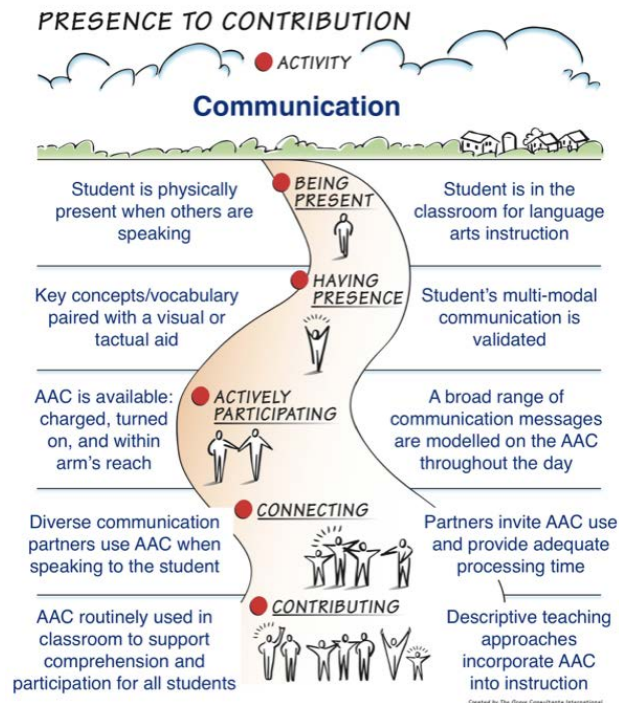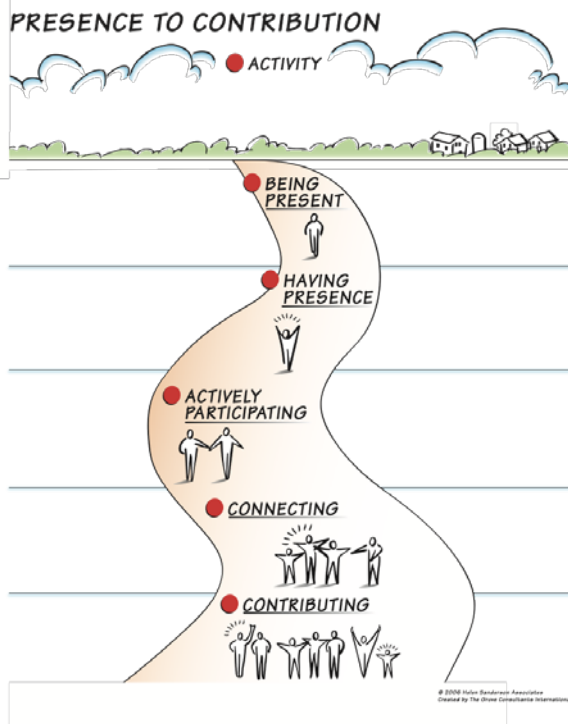
# Tools to discover who is important for what

Relationship circle

family

school

home and other paid supporters

friends and non paid relationships

Skills needed

Support needed and wanted

Personality characteristics needed

Shared common interests

# Who are all the potential communication partners?

Student

Friends — Share likes — Jared, Ethan

Classroom staff — Aide 2, Gen ed teacher, Special educator, aide

Peers — Jordan, Jake, Ahmed

Therapists — Peer tutor, SLP, OT student

Family — sibling, mom, grandparent, dad

Administration — receptionist, counselor, principal, janitor

# Tools to discover what it would take for contribution



PRESENCE TO CONTRIBUTION
ACTIVITY

- BEING PRESENT
- HAVING PRESENCE
- ACTIVELY PARTICIPATING
- CONNECTING
- CONTRIBUTING

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PRESENCE TO CONTRIBUTION
ACTIVITY
Communication

**BEING PRESENT**
Student is physically present when others are speaking | Student is in the classroom for language arts instruction

**HAVING PRESENCE**
Key concepts/vocabulary paired with a visual or tactual aid | Student's multi-modal communication is validated

**ACTIVELY PARTICIPATING**
AAC is available: charged, turned on, and within arm's reach | A broad range of communication messages are modelled on the AAC throughout the day

**CONNECTING**
Diverse communication partners use AAC when speaking to the student | Partners invite AAC use and provide adequate processing time

**CONTRIBUTING**
AAC routinely used in classroom to support comprehension and participation for all students | Descriptive teaching approaches incorporate AAC into instruction

Created by The Grove Consultants International

Erin Sheldon, M Ed

**Tool to integrate the supports:** technology & communication partners across contexts



CHARTING the LifeCourse

**Integrated Supports**

People need supports to lead good lives. Using a combination of lots of different kinds of support helps to plot a trajectory toward an inclusive, quality, community life. This tool will help families and individuals think about how to work in partnership to support their vision for a good life.

Technology

Personal Strengths & Assets

Relationships

AAC systems

Student's strengths & interests

Friends & family

Student

General supports

Special supports

Community Based

Eligibility Specific

Access the LifeCourse framework and tools at lifecoursetools.com

Developed by the UMKC Institute for Human Development, UCEDD. More tools and materials at lifecoursetools.com          MAY 2016

# How does this become increased choice and control?

Support the student to be involved in the planning process and decision-making, such as by using a Talking Mats framework.

# Poll #3

Are you familiar with Talking Mats?

No
A little
Yes
Yes, and I use the process regularly!

# Talking Mats

- Ask open-ended question:
  "How do you feel about..".
- Use a rating scale:
  like/ not like, important/ not
- Use dynamic visuals for each aspect
- Always provide a range of options (10-20 per mat)
- Recap what the student communicated
- Model if the student does not yet participate

like

Rating scale

Positive

Negative

don't

10-20 Options

bird

rabbit

bird

cat

dog

bugs 21f

Topic card

animals 21

# Rating scale

## Positive

like

## Neutral

I don't know

okay

## Negative

## Neutral

not

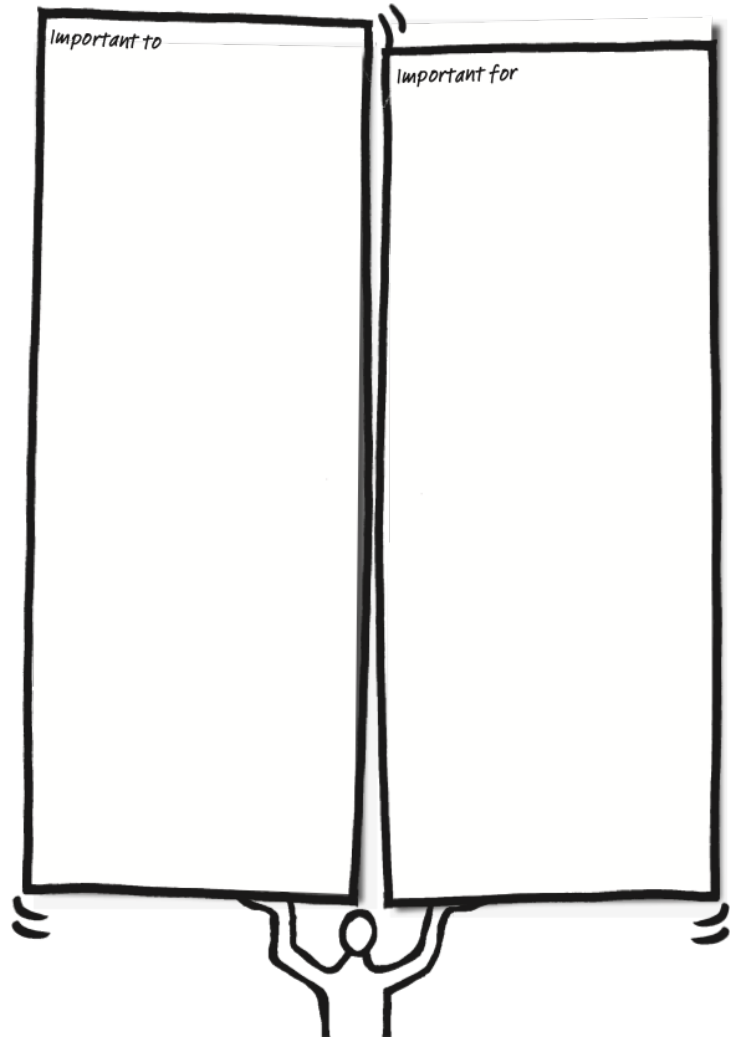## 10-20 Options

bird

rabbit

bird

cat

dog

bugs

## Topic card

animals

Discovering WHAT is important, what makes this student unique

like

I don't know

not

bird

rabbit

bird

cat
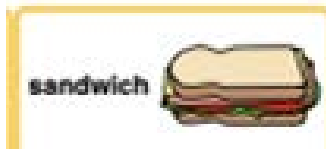
dog
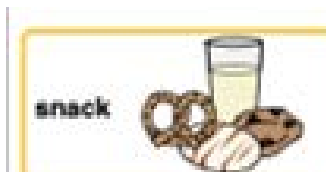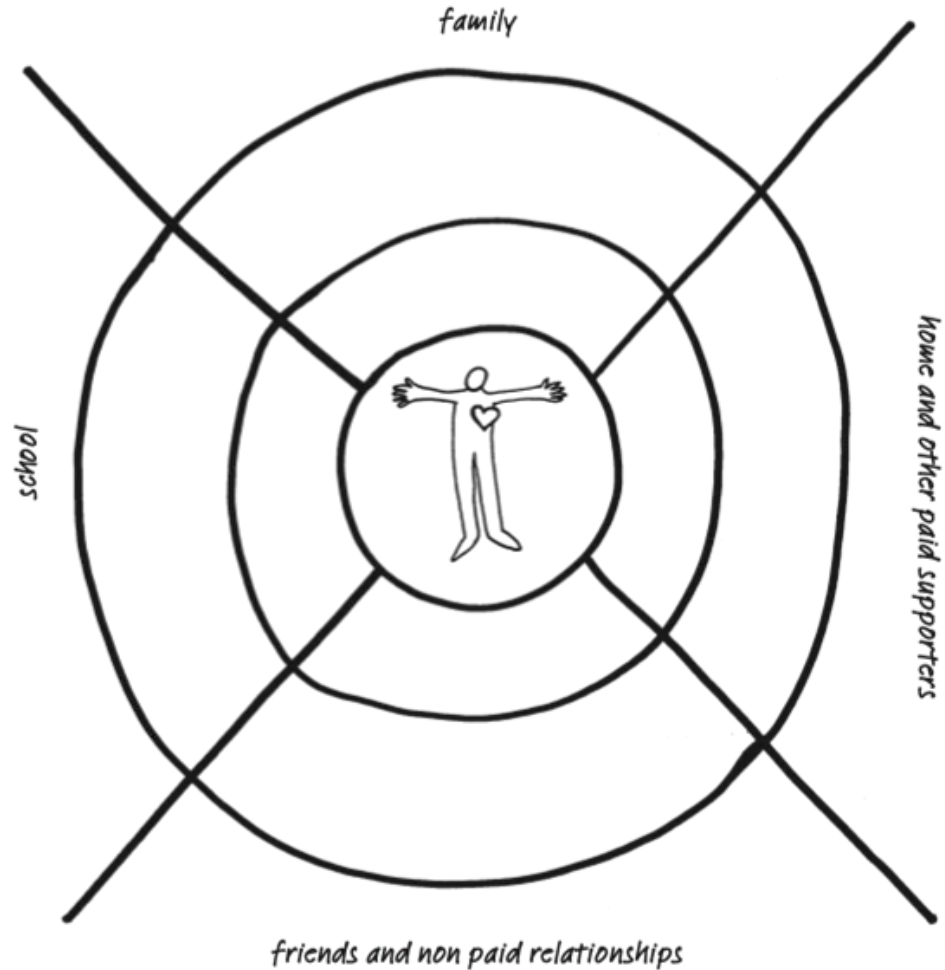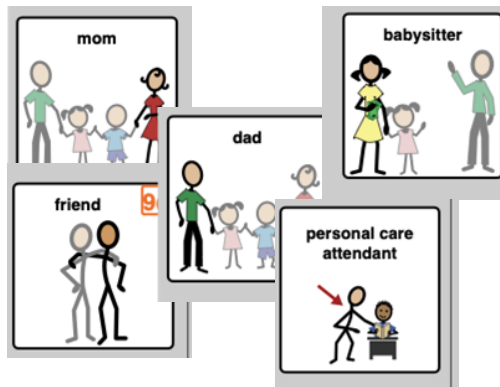
bugs 21f

animals 21

| like | I don't know | not |
|------|--------------|-----|

Vehicles

I like this **4a**

I don't like this **4c**

book, story **29**

**I like this** 4a

yummy

**I don't like this** 4c

yucky

snack

vegetables

sandwich

fruit

food / drink 18

# Discovering WHO is important

**I like this** 4a

**I don't like this** 4c

**mom**

**babysitter**

**dad**

**friend** 9

**personal care attendant**

**people** 9

# Connection, choice, and control