AT Series: A Closer Look at Access

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Advanced Strategies: Joining the Journey, Not Looking for the Answers

Description

The focus of this webinar will be taking an "in-depth" look at various aspects of access, including scanning, eye gaze, equipment, activity, classrooms, school days, and an individual student functioning within a group and alone independently. As a whole, this process is akin to a journey.

Students are often expected to perform and demonstrate their consistency of use of AAC and AT, but the fact that education also offers the opportunity to learn should not get lost in the shuffle. Creating opportunities for students within their environments can be daunting, but we cannot forget creating opportunities within which children learn is the school experience. This session will help us recognize the BIG PICTURE and create those opportunities.

Learning Objectives

- Identify two specific challenges any student faces when using scanning as an access technique with AAC
- Identify three issues of inaccessibility within the classroom that can be shared and, in time, altered with team support
- Identify at least two times in a week when modeling of language, partner-assisted scanning, and AAC and/or access to AT may be added to optimize interactions with students who are non-speaking

Today's Focus:

- Our students are on a journey WITH us. It takes all of us, as a team, to teach access and support its use with AT and AAC with our students.
- Our students will be WORKING HARD & we will be WORKING HARD.
- We expect hard work, we embrace hard work, because hard work is an inherent part of learning, and the "hard" isn't a problem, but a lack of expectations is a problem.
- Learning to read, learning to play a musical instrument, using a computer for tasks, are all challenging, and hard work is a prerequisite.

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I. The Obsession with the development of Motor "Consistency" in access

    A. "Consistency" and "efficiency" and "reliability" are engineering terms, used to describe and test machinery. Their predictable behaviors are measured readily. Their science is physics.

    B. Human beings, our "science" is physiology.

        1. Isolated "motor" control is not "consistent" nor "reliable."

        2. It is "process oriented," "routine dependent" and "adaptive"

        3. We are never "error-free" nor "mistake-proof" but we are able to recognize mistakes and repair them.

        4. Motor Acts and machine control cannot be measured expect on laboratory experiments, which are not Life Situations, nor Life Environments

    C. Motor vs. Cognitive competence and function. What is the difference between a "cognitive" error and a "motor" mistake?

II. A BIG challenge for students who are learning to use AAC and the use of an AAC device is a lack of experience with the machine itself, its software, its navigational strategies. These need to be TAUGHT too.

    A. Access is a part of the activity, not the beginning, nor the most important. And it will grow and develop as task engagement, experience, practice and focus with the activity grows.

    B. Movement is critical

        1. Movement within the child's chair while seated is needed for kinesthetic awareness (which leads to focused visual attention)

        2. Movement with the classroom, navigating the room, develops cognitive mapping, which supports the use of navigating the AAC device

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3. Movement within the activity, out of the chair, with PT and OT, to "act out" and "practice" non-picture producing words

4. Independent mobility and its use for "approach" is how communication/conversation is initiated; independent mobility and its "exit" is how a conversation/communication ends

C. Without Mobility

1. Without mobility, it is challenging for any child/student to learn the power of initiating a conversation independently and experiencing the "power" of using an AAC device

2. Without mobility, it is challenging for any child/student to learn navigation, which is critical for managing vocabulary, sequencing, and speaking with multiple utterances on an AAC device

III. Task Analysis, development of language and its needed movement

A. Grammar

1. Student in supported walker going "over there" "because" we need to find the _____!

2. Student going IN THERE (the library) today, BUT not tomorrow.

3. Bringing in big appliance boxes, or creating, with blankets, a tent or tunnel so that within the supported walker or with assisted upright mobility student can experience:

   Going IN, UNDER, (knocking/pushing) it DOWN, going OVER it, Pulling it back, fixing it, then going back to the student's and talking about what happened, emphasizing the "CORE" words (commonly used vocabulary) and their actions, taking some photos or videos, and reviewing them, "WHEN the blanket fee, and HOW it was fixed, and whether we WILL try NEXT time a different method"

4. Choose several words on purpose (with teacher and SLP) to use and plan an activity OUT OF CHAIR with these words

5. Engage in the activity, focusing on the words and their position and importance

6. Plan the "after" discussion, and write it down TOGETHER to share with someone, or video it on an IPAD, or find the words in the AAC device

7. Begin to "collect" these activities/experiences with words and their grammar, developing a place for this collection and its retrieval for independent use

   - Use student peers to work with you and the activity. The student peer can find the words on the AAC device, too, and/or help write up or video the experience.

IV. Other Critical Activities and Supports Needed within the Classroom and the Student's Daily activities

A. Alerting, always available, AAC to AAC

B. Robust Vocabulary, which starts and builds and is readily available, but can be simplified in any lesson

C. Printing, Taking photos, and videos

D. Developing journals

E. Creating teaching videos with the student as "star" including same age peers

F. Every moment of every day is vital to communication and learning and opportunity

V. New Paradigms we need to embrace:

A. Access sites develop from interest, intention, and experience in activity, not in isolation.

B. Consistency is NOT what is needed to be measured, but INTEREST, INTENTION, and ATTENTION are needed.

C. The activity must be KNOWN by the student, with the beginning, middle and end of the activity to be predictable and anticipated.

D. Repetition of the activity will bring anticipation of motor use and support its increased accuracy, rather than just motor practice alone

E. Motor learning requires: NOT verbal prompts, a mental rehearsal, and specific feedback and the activity's end

F. The use of the switch must become transparent to the task, 2 switch scanning, and the use of "electronic sensors"

G. Activities, like vocabulary, need to build, and be interesting, and complex

H. Mistakes well be made, expected, and embraced

I. Alternative access must be used by others to support the "mental rehearsal" and "visualization of competence"

J. Creating Classrooms full of opportunities for access and accessibility