



Setting goals for AAC

What skills do our students need to learn to become successful communicators? What areas should we be focussing on when setting goals for AAC use?

There are several areas we need to think about to support our students to develop communicative competence. Light (1989) proposed that AAC users need to develop knowledge, judgement and skills in four interrelated areas. It can be useful to consider your student's skills and areas for development in each of the 4 areas of communicative competence below.

Operational Competence

- Technical skills used to operate the AAC system
- Access to the system (eg. direct selection, scanning)
- Use of the AAC system features (eg. on/off, volume, clear etc.)
- Skills to use the system most efficiently

Linguistic Competence

- Learning the language of the home and community (expressive and receptive)
- Learning symbols that represent vocabulary and the way vocabulary is organised in the AAC system
- Combining words into sentences
- Range of language functions (requesting, commenting, greeting, protesting, sharing information etc.)

Communicative Competence

Social Competence

- Participating in conversation
- Discourse strategies (eg. initiating, turn taking)
- Expressing different interaction functions (eg. expressing wants and needs, sharing information, expressing emotions, commenting, protesting etc.)

Strategic Competence

- Using the most appropriate communication method and vocabulary for the situation
- Developing compensatory strategies for effective communication within the AAC system and any restrictions for the person using AAC
- repairing communication breakdown

(Kovach, 2009)

How do I know where my students are at with their AAC skills? What might some next steps be?

It can be useful to work with the team around the student using AAC to complete some assessment to help determine a student's communication strengths and areas for development. Some assessment tools which could be a useful part of your ongoing assessment include:

Augmentative and Alternative Communication Profile: A Continuum of Learning (Kovach, 2009). An assessment measuring students' skill development across all 4 areas of communicative competence using their AAC system.

Social Networks: An Assessment and Intervention Planning Inventory for Individuals with Complex Communication Needs and Their Communication Partners (Blackstone & Hunt Berg, 2012). An inventory of the students' circles of communication partners, and the tools, strategies and effectiveness of communication interactions with different people.

The Pragmatics Profile of Everyday Communication Skills in Children (Dewart & Summers, 1995). An informal interview to explore a child's communication skills including the range of communicative functions they are using and their responses to communication situations.

Communication Matrix (Rowland, 2003). An online assessment tool which captures the range of communicative functions, and different communication methods a student is using.

Making goals meaningful

Linda Burkhart and Gayle Porter (2009, 2010) share valuable thoughts on setting meaningful communication goals for AAC users that will work towards the ultimate goal of autonomous communication (to be able to say whatever they want, whenever they want, to whoever they want). Some key points are noted below:

- Incorporate flexibility for the student to say what they want to say, when they want to say it
- Reflect increasing the student's ability to use a broad range of communicative functions to express real ideas in real situations through multiple modes
- Do not require that the student will have to communicate what someone else wants them to 'say'.
- Increase appropriateness of language, not just quantity.

"Goals must be measurable, but do not have to be measured in a testing format. It is often more appropriate to write the goal as measured over natural contexts throughout the day. For example, the child will _____ more than ___ number of times within the natural context of school activities." (Burkhart & Porter, 2009)

Read more about Linda Burkhart and Gayle Porter's thoughts on the topic in these presentation handouts:

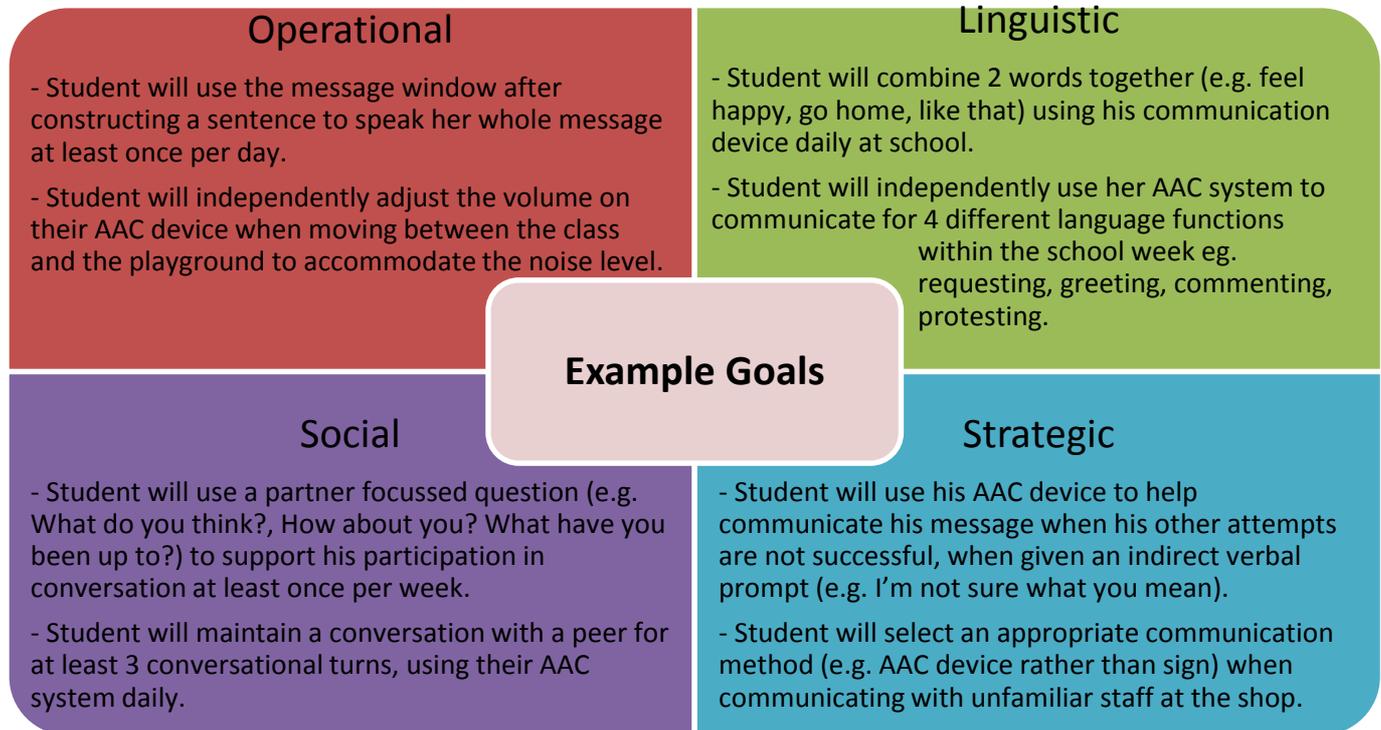
Writing IEP goals for authentic communication

http://lburkhart.com/Writing_IEP_Goals_rev11.pdf

Writing IEP goals for emergent communicators

http://www.lburkhart.com/hand_ISAAC_B/IEP_goals_ISAAC_Barcelona_handout.pdf

Some example AAC related goals



Can I see some more examples of AAC related goals?

There are a number of resources available with more information about setting meaningful goals around AAC and with many examples of communication goals for students using AAC:

How I do it: Writing IEP goals by Lauren Enders

<http://praacticalaac.org/praactical/how-i-do-it-writing-iep-goals-for-students-who-use-aac-with-lauren-enders/>

More PrAACtical AAC goals that matter

<http://praacticalaac.org/praactical/more-praactical-aac-goals-that-matter/>
http://praacticalaac.org/?wpfb_dl=94

PrAACtical suggestions for writing AAC goals

<http://praacticalaac.org/praactical/praactical-suggestions-writing-goals-for-people-learning-aac/>

Dynamic AAC goals grid

<http://www.dynavoxtech.com/training/toolkit/details.aspx?id=32>

Sample AAC goals

<http://www.ushaonline.net/Resources/Documents/Sample+AAC+Goals.pdf>

Lauren S. Enders' Pinterest board of AAC goal related resources

<https://www.pinterest.com/lasenders/aac-writing-goals-objectives/>

S Specific
M Measurable
A Achievable
R Realistic
T Timely

'SMART' goals

The SMART acronym is commonly used for writing quality goals in many fields. Including these features in the goals you write, will help make it easier to monitor and report on students' progress. Read more about SMART goals here

<http://uk.dynavotech.com/tips/communication/details.aspx?id=27>



**Then evaluate and
celebrate your
students' AAC
successes!**



References

Blackstone, S., & Hunt Berg, M. (2012). *Social networks: an assessment and intervention planning inventory for individuals with complex communication needs and their communication partners*. Verona, WI: Attainment Company Inc.

Burkhart, L., & Porter, G. (2009) *Writing IEP goals and objectives for authentic communication – for children with complex communication needs*. Retrieved September 3, 2015, from http://lburkhart.com/Writing_IEP_Goals_rev11.pdf

Burkhart, L., & Porter, G. (2010) *Writing IEP goals for emergent communicators*. Retrieved September 3, 2015, from http://www.lburkhart.com/hand_ISAAC_B/IEP_goals_ISAAC_Barcelona_handout.pdf

Dewart, H. & Summers, S. (1995) *The pragmatics profile of everyday communication skills in children*. Windsor, UK: NFER Nelson.

Kovach, T. M. (2009). *Augmentative & Alternative Communication Profile: A Continuum of Learning*. East Moline, IL: LinguiSystems.

Light, J. (1989). Toward a definition of communicative competence for individuals using augmentative and alternative communication systems. *Augmentative and Alternative Communication*, (5), 137-144.

Rowland, C. (2016). *The communication matrix*. Retrieved June 24, 2016, from <http://communicationMatrix.org>