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The USSAAC Webinar Series

Monday, November 5, 2018
7:00 PM Eastern

Transitioning Students Using AAC: Strategies to Promote Full Inclusion

Presenter: Tracy Rackensperger, Ph.D.
Institute on Human Development and Disability
University of Georgia
USSAAC's Vice-President of People Who Use AAC and Their Families

Facilitator: Sarah W. Blackstone, Ph.D.z
USSAAC's Past President

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International Society for Augmentative and Alternative Communication

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Tracy Rackensperger, Ph.D.
trackens@uga.edu
College of Family and Consumer Sciences
Institute on Human Development and Disability
University of Georgia
Athens, GA
USSAAC's VP of Persons Who Use AAC and their Family Members

WHAT WILL YOU LEARN?

1) Identify strategies to support students using AAC in living fully inclusive lives.

2) Describe how using person-centered planning, strengths-based approaches, self-advocacy / self-determination building activities play significant roles in the lives of students using AAC

3) Explain how I was able to reach my potential.

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Transitioning Students Using AAC: Strategies to Promote Full Inclusion

Tracy Rackensperger, Ph.D.

Institute on Human Development and Disability

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USSAAC's Vice-President of People Who Use AAC and Their Families

Overview of Session

This session will:

- provide you with strategies to support students using AAC in living fully inclusive lives.
- engage you to discover how using person-centered planning, strengths-based approaches, self-advocacy / self-determination building activities play significant roles in the lives of students using AAC.

Background

People who use augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) and their families have goals for life after high school (Bryen & Moulton, 1998).

Many students needing AAC are deprived of the chance to partake in apposite general education (Light & McNaughton, 2015).

More than 95% of individuals with complex communication needs are unemployed (Light & McNaughton, 2015).

Background

Many students are denied access to AAC because of various myths, including the common myth that AAC hinders speech development (Romski & Sevcik, 2005).

Many adults with intellectual disabilities and complex communication live in group homes without AAC interventions (Kane, 2015).

The outcomes for individuals who experience more significant forms of Autism Spectrum Disorders are very poor. These individuals generally do not make use of speech and do not have employment skills. (Nicholas, Addridge, Zwaigenbaum, & Clark, 2015; Shattuck et al., 2012).

Post-School Outcomes Emphasizing Inclusion

Competitive employment

Post-Secondary education

Community living

Customized Employment

Individuals who use AAC find customized employment a successful way to gain meaningful work, real wages, and a means to contribute to the workplace.

Customized employment uses the practice of Discovery to uncover an individual's strengths, interests, task contributions, and conditions of employment to create meaningful work and a customized fit.

- Rather than looking to work opportunities driven by the market, customized employment practices create employment that fulfills both the applicant with disabilities and the employer's needs.

Customized Employment Strategies

Job carving –

Occurs by modifying one existing job or by blending tasks from multiple jobs to form new positions.

Job creation –

occurs through the process of job carving or by creating totally new job descriptions.

Job Creation

Resource ownership –

allows individuals to earn income by bringing their own equipment, machinery, or other items which are needed by employers.

Self-employment –

involves business planning, designing support strategies, and promoting successful business ventures giving job seekers a number of possibilities for developing flexible and innovative strategies regarding work.

Types of Post-Secondary Education Options

Vocational / Technical School, Community College, or College

Inclusive Post-Secondary Education

Accommodations

A school may not discriminate on the basis of disability.

It must insure that the programs it offers, including extracurricular activities, are accessible to students with disabilities.

Postsecondary schools can do this in a number of ways:

- by providing architectural access
- providing aids and services necessary for effective communication
- by modifying policies, practices and procedures

Inclusive Post-Secondary Education

For people with intellectual and developmental disabilities

Students receive individualized services in college courses, certificate programs, and/or degree programs, for audit.

The individual student's vision and career goals drive services.

The focus is on establishing a student-identified career goal.

Community Living

Through supported living arrangements individuals, even those who use AAC, are able to live in their own homes, control their lives and become part of their communities.

Combating the Segregation Cycle

Sometimes, when we think about transitioning students who use AAC, we, along with family members, may only consider group homes and day programs for individuals.

In reality, given the right planning, students with complex communication needs can be actively participating in inclusive communities.

Identifying Supports

Finding out the strengths and abilities of students who use AAC will lead to creating supports promoting independence and productivity.

Using disability-specific supports (e.g., vocational rehabilitation) as well as natural supports (e.g., local career center) must be considered based on high expectations and needs.

Systems Centered vs. Person Centered

System Centered	Person Centered
Focuses on deficits and labels	Focuses on capacities, gifts, strengths, & dreams
Plans usually include 'placement' in a program	Plans support a rich and active community life based on the individual's gifts & interests.
Inflexible, offering a limited number of program options	Flexible, finding new possibilities unique to each person

Bradley, V. (1994).

Importance of Family Involvement

Supporting the self-determination of individuals enables these individuals to become self-reliant, and successful at the things important to them.

Fostering self-determination in childhood assists students as they transition into adulthood.

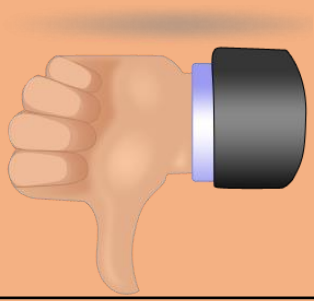
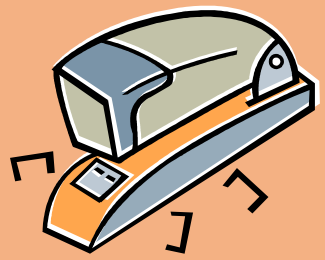
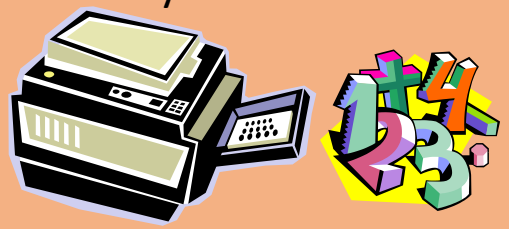
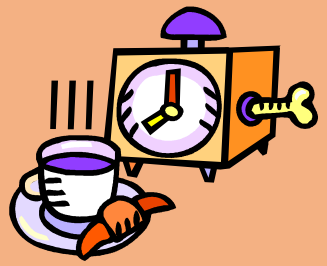
Low-Technology AAC

For those just beginning to understand or investigate AAC, low-tech options may be very attractive to try and explore with people who have difficulty communicating verbally.

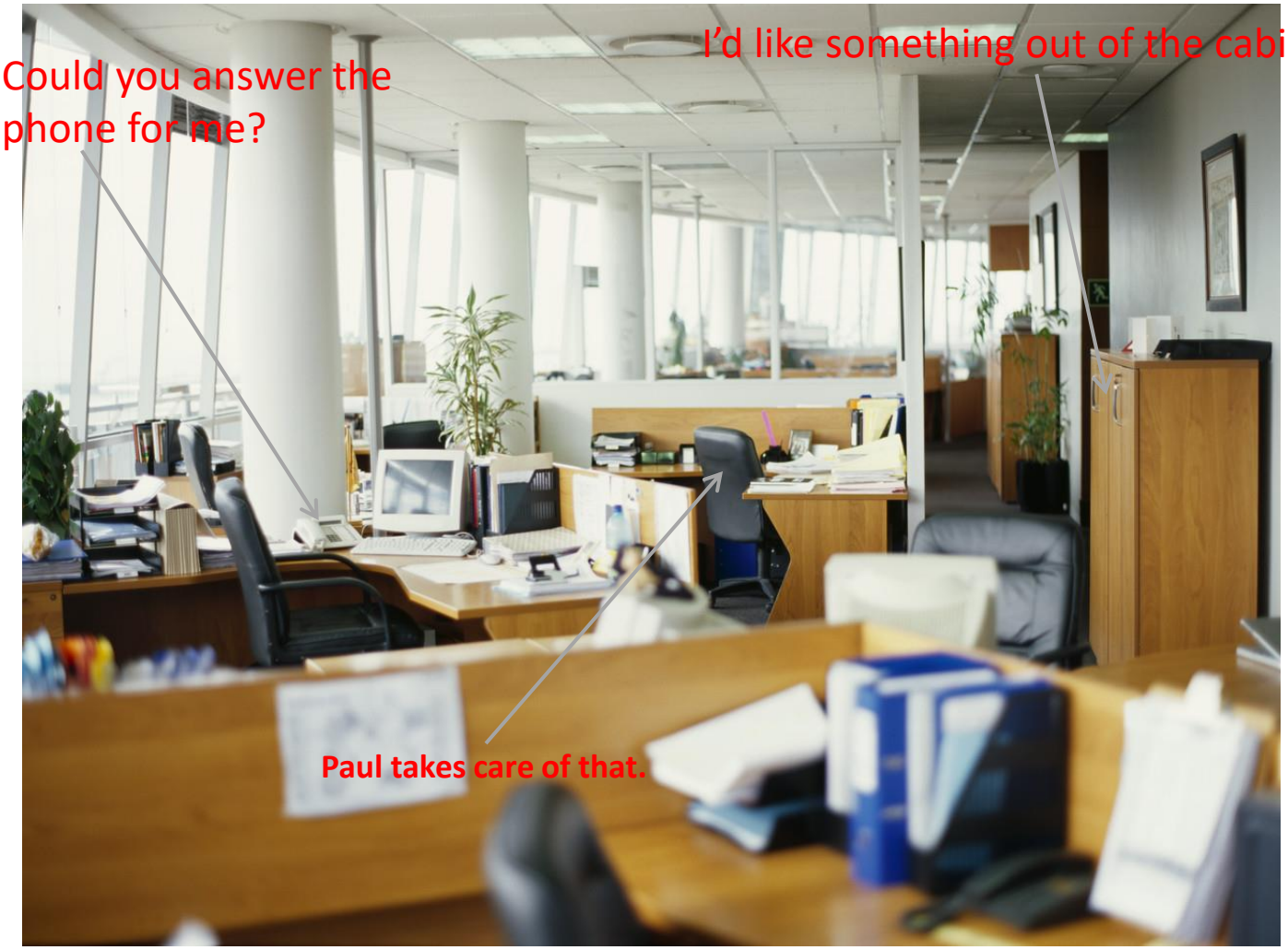
Low-Tech devices are…

- Easy-to-learn
- Inexpensive
- Makeable with common items

Examples – Picture Boards

Yes	No 	I don't know
I'll staple that for you. 	How many copies do you need? 	I'll show you where to find it.
Do they need to be filed?	Break Time! 	I'm leaving for the day.

Examples - Photographs



Low-Technology Books

Multiple picture pages and/or photographs can be bounded together to form communication books.

People with little or no control of their hands may be able to use a laser pointer attached to their heads to select messages.

High-Technology

Some examples of high-tech devices are:

- Dedicated Synthesized Speech Generating Systems
- Dedicated Recorded Speech Systems
- Hybrid Systems
- Computer-Based Systems

High-Technology (con’t)

While high-tech AAC devices are often expensive and require evaluations, they offer a extraordinary level of independence to people.

My Experience

I use augmentative communication to communicate with people who have difficulty understanding my own natural speech.

I have used these devices to interact with teachers, classmates, employers, coworkers, strangers and friends.

I am using augmentative communication more and more to give presentations, spread ideas, and help others who have developmental disabilities (Rackensperger, 2005).

My Experience

My family has always been encouraging of augmentative communication, and so was the educational system.

I have been included in my schools since I was in the fourth grade and have had a methodology of communicating all the way through my schooling.

I was one of a small number of individuals introduced to augmentative communication at an extremely young age (Rackensperger, 2005).

My Experience

I worked with SLPs to develop skills to use my augmentative communication device.

I worked with them on improving my verbal skills as well (Rackensperger, 2005).

Keys to My Success

- Having high expectations
- Staying person-centered, not system-centered
- Utilization of natural supports to successfully transition into adulthood (Rackensperger, 2018)

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Questions
Answers

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  Session Number: 1721
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