

Beyond “Please” & “Thank you”: The importance of teaching social skills to children who use AAC.

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AAC and Social Communication

Social pragmatics is an important component of communication.

Complex processes: reading partner cues, developing empathy, and integrating others' perspectives

Explicit instruction: people with CCN frequently have limited communication opportunities



AAC and Social Communication

Weave pragmatics strategies
into global AAC interventions
(As a bonus, it is also a
good way to teach expressive
language.)



AAC and Social Communication

This talk will focus on theories underlying pragmatics instruction and how they can be adapted for AAC users who are learning language.



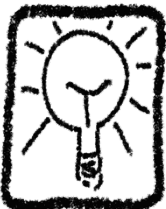
Pragmatics (ASHA, 2014)



Using language



Adapting language



Following rules

Using Language for different purposes

Requesting: *"I would like a cookie, please."*

Informing: *"I'm going to get a cookie."*

Promising: *"I'm going to get you a cookie."*

Demanding: *"Give me a cookie!"*



Adapting language to the listener or context

Talking differently to different people



Establishing shared knowledge base

Speaking differently in different environments



Following Rules for Conversation and Storytelling

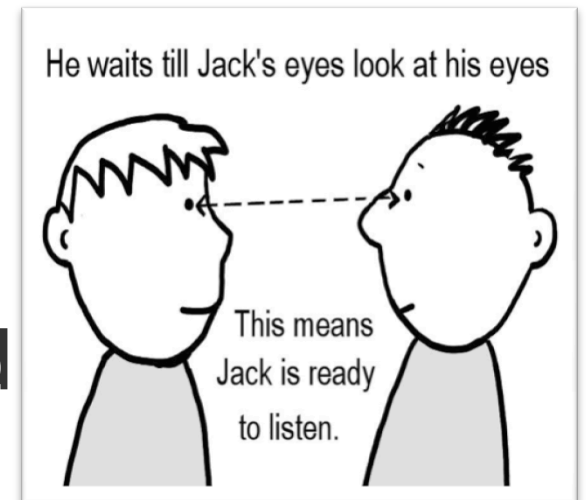
Taking turns in conversation

Introducing topics of conversation

Staying on topic

Rephrasing when misunderstood

Using verbal and nonverbal signals

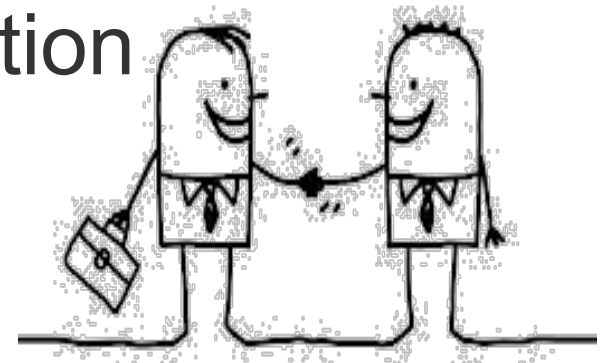


Following Rules for Conversation and Storytelling

Standing the appropriate distance from someone when speaking

Using facial expressions and eye contact

Joining an established conversation



Barriers to Strong Pragmatics



Limited opportunities to communicate

Limited communication partners

Limited vocabulary for social communication

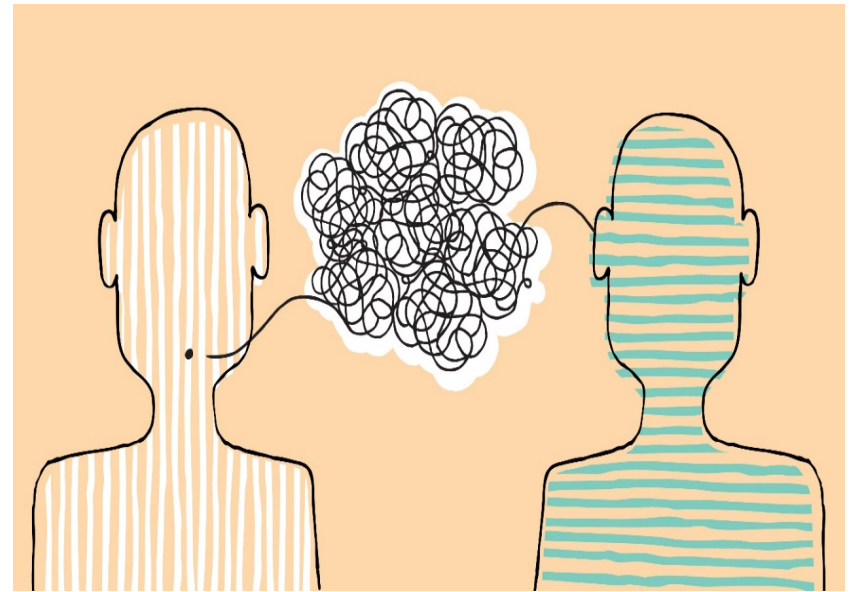
Barriers to Strong Pragmatics

AAC systems malfunction

Time constraints on communication

System doesn't authentically communicate intentions

Partners may not understand the message



Facilitators for Pragmatics

Conversation topics ↓

Phrases →

Sample Message Text

people actions feelings place things stuff to and
names head colors + place body s with
jobs hands describing animals clothes ed in on
school names body fancy animals vehicles ing about over
through under a the

save work
clear
type
delete
speak

Single words →

A wide variety of vocabulary

Facilitators for Pragmatics

ABOUT ME



ABOUT YOU



Trained communication partners:

- Understand how the AAC system works

- Understand good pragmatics for communicating with someone who uses AAC

Facilitators for Pragmatics



A variety of ways to establish social communication

Photos * Videos * Links * Stored Messages * Appropriate voice

Teaching Social Communication

Generating language is not enough

Build relationships

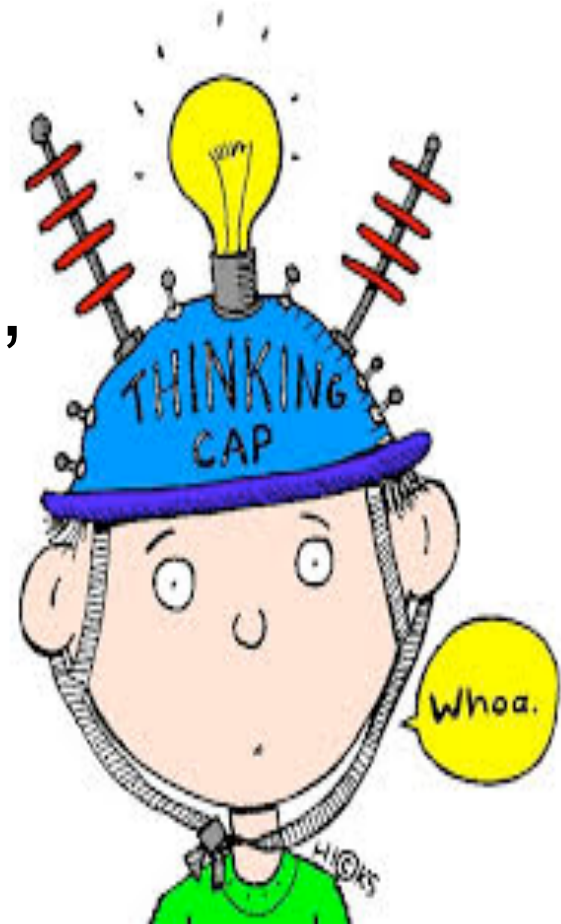
Social motivation

Concrete strategies



Example: Think. Know. Guess.

Understanding about others'
motivations



Foundation of strong social communication

Central Coherence

Theory of Mind

Strong executive functioning



Central Coherence Theory

“The big picture”

Thinking about the
parts

Relating information



Barriers to Strong Central Coherence

Lack of exposure to narratives

Lack of conversation about narratives

Lack of illustration of part whole relationships

Lack of access to vocabulary necessary to talk about relationships



Strategies For Strong Central Coherence

Teaching categories

Illustrating relationships

Modeling answers to “why” questions

Introducing core words that can be used to connect ideas



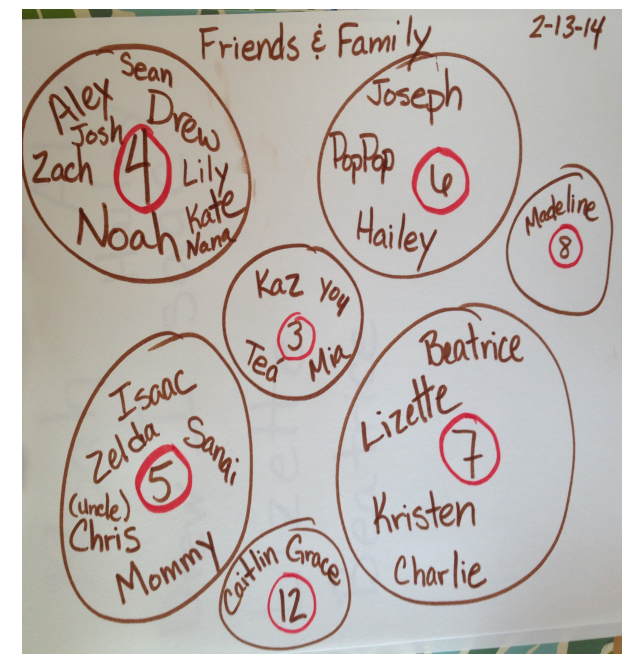
Theory of Mind (ToM)

Tracking what others know

Thinking across personal interactions

Using language to inquire about another person's interests

Reflecting on interactions and then monitoring our personal responses



Barriers to Establishing ToM

Lack of opportunities to reflect or express opinions

Lack of question asking opportunities

Lack of opportunity to brainstorm about the likes and interests friends and family

Lack of opportunity to assign attributes:
funny, talented, mean...



Strategies to Support ToM

Create schemas

Reflection on others' feelings
or motivations

Vocabulary about the interests
others



Executive Functioning

Organization

Good judgment

Flexibility

Reorganization

Problem solving



Examples of Poor Executive Functioning

Impulsivity

Perseveration

Difficulty planning actions

Difficulty regulating emotions

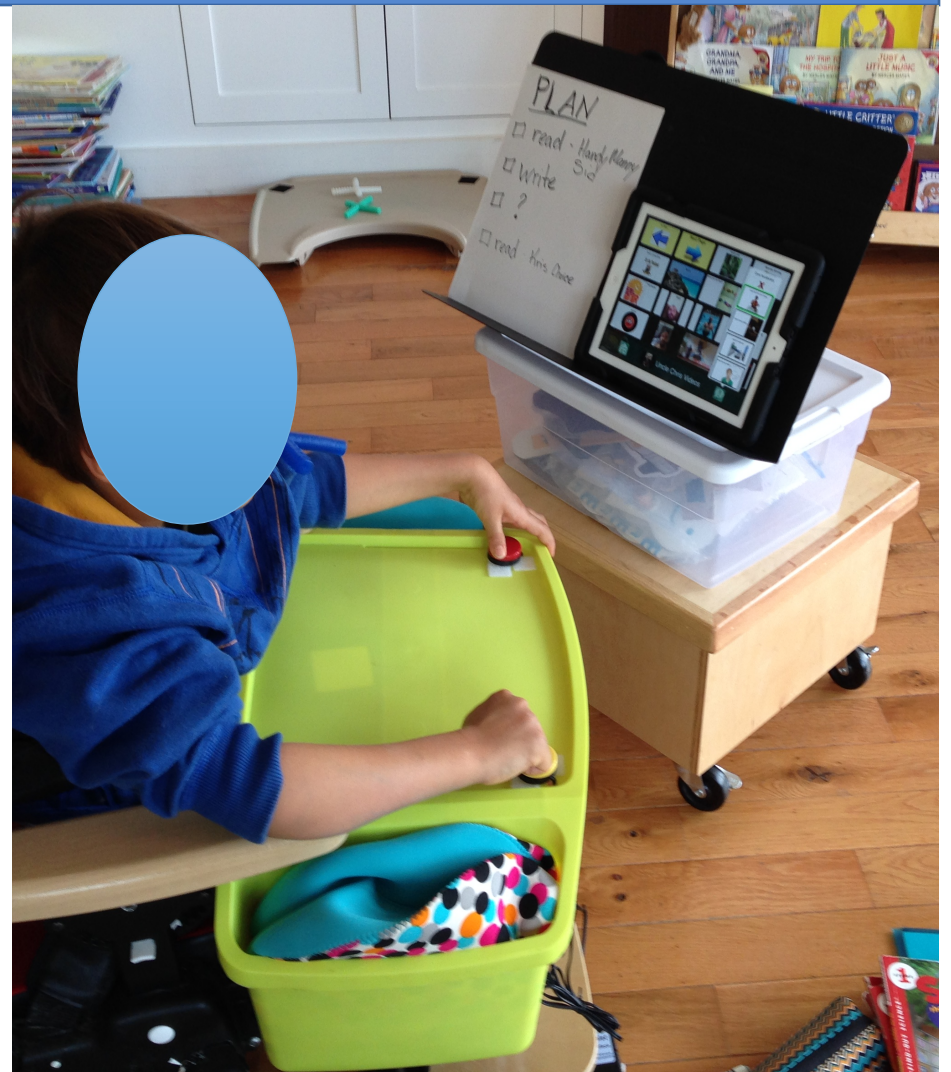


Supporting Executive Functioning

Making a plan

Visual supports

Practicing strategies



Social Communication Strategies

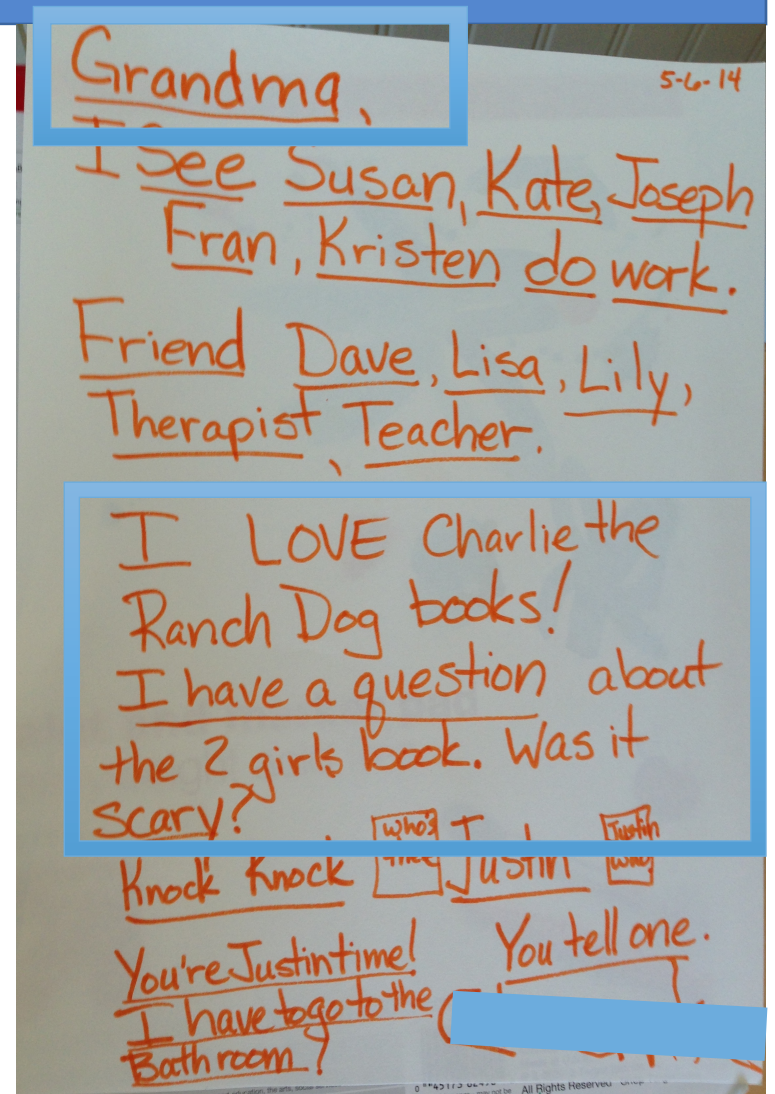
Recognizing:

Presence of another person

Individuality of another person

Another person has his or her own person set of emotions

Another person has his or her own set of desires and motives



Social Communication Strategies

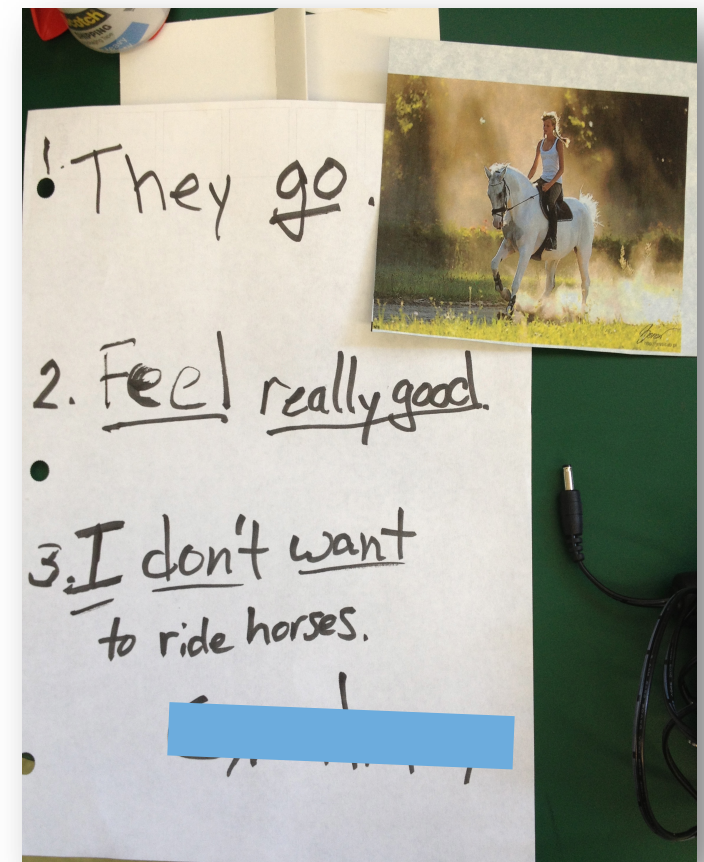
Developing concepts:

Another's potential actions

Another's personality

Desire to learn about others

And using memory

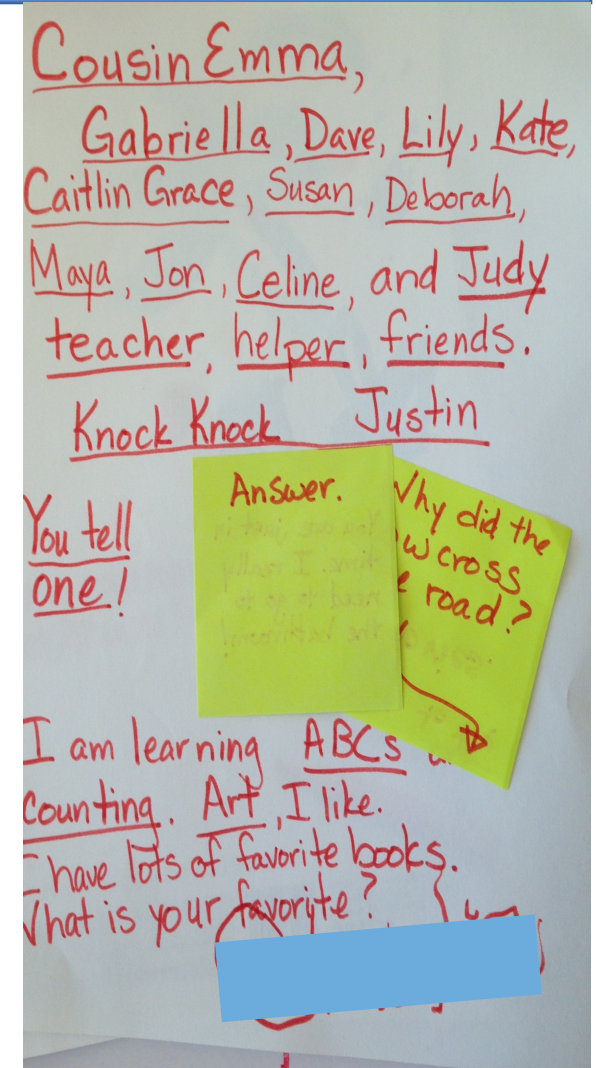


Social Communication Strategies

Inquiring about another person's interests

Understanding social conventions

Staying aware communication partner



References

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Thank you!

If you have questions or would like to talk further about this topic, please contact:

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