

Getting and Keeping AAC After High School

Considerations for transitioning students who use ACC now, and who will need AAC in the future

Kathryn Helland, MS, CCC-SLP



PENNSYLVANIA'S INITIATIVE **PIAT** ON ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY



A program of the Institute on Disabilities at Temple University



"For people without disabilities, technology makes things easier."

For people with disabilities, technology makes things possible."

Who am I?

- AAC Services Coordinator for the Institute on Disabilities at Temple University
- Parent of a child with an autism spectrum disorder
- Speech-language pathologist
- Kathryn.Helland@Temple.edu



Sometimes when I go to a workshop, the presenter will provide a handout. A handout is a packet of paper that will give me ideas and a place to take notes. It is OK if the handout doesn't match the presentation perfectly. I will not get upset. I will not get frustrated with the presenter. I will write a note to remind myself to ask the presenter to send me the information that is missing from the handout if it is of interest to me.

Stephanie M. Ekis, MS CCC-SLP



Assistive Technology

- AT/AAC: What are we talking about?
- How does AT/AAC support post-secondary outcomes?
- Who funds AT devices and services – for students? After graduation?
- How/where do we obtain devices/supports after graduation?
- What steps should we take as part of transition planning?



What is AT?

Federal definition from IDEA '04:

- **Assistive Technology Device:** any item that is used to "increase, maintain, or improve functional capabilities of a child with a disability" (IDEA '04, Section 602)
- **Assistive Technology Services:** any service that "directly assists a child with a disability in the selection, acquisition, or use of an assistive technology device"



AT Helps you “do the things you want (or need) to do”

- ...today
- ...tomorrow
- ...with greater independence or ease



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What is AAC?

- ▶ AAC = Augmentative and Alternative Communication
- ▶ “Augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) includes all forms of communication (other than oral speech) that are used to express thoughts, needs, wants, and ideas. We all use AAC when we make facial expressions or gestures, use symbols or pictures, or write.”
- ▶ <http://www.asha.org/public/speech/disorders/AAC/>



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AAC Devices



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- Not being able to speak is NOT the same as not having anything to say.



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Let's Bust Some Myths about AAC!



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AAC Myths...

- My family member is too...
 - Impaired
 - Old
 - Behavioral.....



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BUSTED!

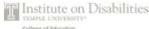
- We need to presume competence!
- Everyone has a right to be heard.
- Increased communication tends to decrease behaviors.
- (All behavior is communication!)
- Whether 14 or 44, it is not too late

AAC Myths...



- If I give my consumer an AAC device, they will never speak verbally....

BUSTED!

- They need to be able to communicate with novel listeners (the pizza guy, the doctor, etc...)
- The modeling provided by an AAC device does not decrease verbal output
- Some users become more verbal
- The end goal is communication!

AAC Myths



I just hand my consumer her device and she will automatically know how to use it.





- Our students need people to model communication
- They will learn to communicate over time
- So....should we introduce a new AAC device or upgrade right before graduation?



Who is A CANDIDATE for a Communication system?

- IN 1993 PAT MIRENDA WROTE, "WE HAVE DISCOVERED INCREASINGLY THAT COMMUNICATION HAS ONLY ONE PREREQUISITE; IT HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH MENTAL AGE, CHRONOLOGICAL AGE, PREREQUISITE SKILLS, MATHEMATICAL FORMULAE, OR ANY OF THE OTHER MODELS THAT HAVE BEEN DEVELOPED TO DECIDE WHO IS AN AAC CANDIDATE AND WHO IS NOT.
 - BREATHING IS THE ONLY PREREQUISITE THAT IS RELEVANT TO COMMUNICATION. BREATHING EQUALS LIFE, AND LIFE EQUALS COMMUNICATION. IT IS THAT SIMPLE." WHEN SHOULD A COMMUNICATION SYSTEM BE AVAILABLE?



What is it you need to *do* with AAC?

- Communicate (voice; face to face)
- Communicate (distance telecommunication)
 - Text messages
 - Emails
 - Post to Social Media
 - Bluetooth link to a cell phone (dedicated AAC devices)
- Social Interaction!
- Travel (from A to B)
- Communication happens everywhere!



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Any Questions?



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Funding Sources

- School-based Access (Medicaid)
- Purchase from school district
- OVR
- Medicaid
- Private Insurance
- Employer (under ADA)
- Post-secondary Instituti
- Self



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Today...Tomorrow (Worst Case Scenario...)



- I have a dedicated communication device from school
- My school SLP programs the device and has the backup files
- My parents were not trained to program my device and feel like they are not the experts
- My device and skills are not documented in my IEP
- I have graduated from entitlement programs to eligibility programs
- I am placed on a wait list for months to get waiver coverage
- The school owned my SGD and took it back when I graduated
- The device was not sent home from school and my family does not know exactly what I was using....



Today...Tomorrow (Best Case Scenario)



- My SGD was purchased via insurance or district MA funds
- Or, my district has agreed to sell me my SGD upon graduation
- My parents receive training and are given resources on device upkeep and back ups
- I've worked with an OVR counselor via Early Start and everyone understands how my SGD will help me in employment
- I have a voice
- I have access to back ups of my user
- My new Supports Coordinator has documented my SGD in my ISP
- My therapists have documented my device use, vocabulary set, and other information that will help future caregivers to provide continuity



Where Do We Start our Planning?



Does the student still NEED AAC?

- What is being done to address those needs **prior to** graduation?
- Will those needs continue after graduation? (In most cases, yes)
- Do a SETT Process ASAP!
- Borrow trial devices from PaTTAN or PIAT!
- A student should not reach MS w/o a voice! (Transition planning in the IEP @ 14)



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AAC has already been obtained



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Does the Student Have AAC "today"?

Take a device use inventory across environments

Develop an inventory of the AAC devices/strategies the student uses now.

Indicate use at home, at school, in the community.

Indicate which ones will be needed after graduation.



Consider: AT services that support these devices – which will continue to be needed? who will provide?



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*AT Knowledge and Skills Inventory Worksheet
For Transitioning Students "Today"*

- Does the student (*and* family) have the knowledge and skills necessary to operate/maintain/replace a current device that is likely to be needed "tomorrow"?
- Work on these DURING the transition period to avoid post-graduation difficulties!



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What the research tells us:

- Competent AT/AAC use in school does not necessarily carry over to new environments
- Specific skills need to be learned for successful transitions by people who use AT/AAC
- Careful planning, quality AT services, & self determination, together, maximize successful transitions for people who use AT...

Gayl Bowser & Penny Reed, ATIA Conference, 2010, Orlando, Florida



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Any Questions?



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“Tomorrow” - Post-secondary environments

- Education (2 year, 4 year, vo-tech/trade; adult ed)
- Employment (competitive, supported; full-time, part-time; entrepreneurial; telework; etc.)
- Residential (dorm; with parents/family; independent; independent with support; full agency support)
- Community participation (specialized with supports, etc.)



AAC and Work

- Will the current AAC suffice? Does the AT need to change/be modified?
- What *new* devices, functions, skills, and services may be needed in the workplace?
- Will the student learn to self advocate for their use of AAC?



Funding...



Making AAC “Happen” After Graduation from High School

- Who will help you figure out what devices and services you need?
 - PIAT
- How is AT funded? Who is responsible?
 - PATF
- Could YOU get AT if you needed it? How would you go about obtaining it?
- What are the AT funding challenges facing people with disabilities?



More Info on Funding Resources

- <http://www.nls.org/Disability/NationalAssistiveTechnologyProject/FundingofATManualSeries>
- <https://www.drnpa.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/0413-AT-How-to-Pay-for-the-Device-or-Service.pdf>
- <http://www.pattan.net/category/Resources/PaTTAN%20Publications/Browse/Single/?id=50abab5d8b03327b6a000009>



Getting Ready to Request Funding

- Know what you *need* (it may not be possible to get what you *want*) Cadillac versus family car
- Identify who can help with the funding process (case worker? Friend? Family member?) AAC report written by SLP!
- Identify potential funding sources
- Learn and follow the rules for applying
- ***Know your rights, and where to go for help to appeal decisions that are not in your favor!***



Key Questions to Ask

- Do you want to work? **Yes!!**
- What kind of work do you want to do?
- Are you a dependent of active-duty military or veteran? (CHAMPVA and Tricare)



Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR)

- For people with disabilities who want to work and can benefit (in terms of employment outcome)
- USUALLY, limited involvement or responsibility prior to graduation
- May be waiting lists (may vary by district)
- Devices *and* Services
- Principles of "consumer choice"
- OVR may require cost-share; evaluation is free
- OVR not prohibited from exploring other funding (e.g. private insurance)
- OVR may require employer to provide device as an accommodation as per ADA (although, depending on circumstance, OVR provide the training in the device)



More Key Questions

- Your age
- Your diagnosis (medical label)
- Where you live (county)
- You/your family income
- Scope of coverage of your private or public health coverage



School-Based ACCESS

- Medically necessary AT that is a part of the IEP
- Student must be a Medicaid beneficiary; district must be an enrolled provider
- Uses student’s Access number
- Student OWNS the device, so can take with after graduation
- Services can be provided by the school (and these may be billed to Access, as well!)



District-funded

- The LEA may have purchased the device with its own funds
- LEA may give the device to the student upon graduation - **or not**
- LEA may sell the device to the family (at depreciated value) – **or not**
- If family had a “cost share” arrangement, hopefully ownership was made clear at the time!



Medicaid (MA; Access; HealthChoices...)

- Medical necessity is “key” (see DRP publications, www.disabilityrightspa.org)
- More challenging to obtain certain devices for adults (some AT obtainable through School-based Access will not be available at all)
- Often, fewer options for service providers
- Waiver funding may be available
- “Payor of last resort”



Private Insurance

- May have age cut-off for coverage of a child (up until 26 with the ACA)
- May have contractual limitations of scope and duration of coverage
- “Medical Necessity”




Employer

- May have an obligation to provide as a “reasonable accommodation (under the ADA)
- The accommodation should make it easier for the employee to successfully perform the duties of the position. Examples of reasonable accommodations include providing interpreters, readers, or other personal assistance; modifying job duties; restructuring work sites; providing flexible work schedules or work sites (i.e. telework) and providing accessible technology or other workplace adaptive equipment.
- Employer may NOT be required (e.g. small business)
- Employer may benefit from tax incentives




Post-Secondary Institution

Postsecondary institutions are not responsible for acquiring AT or adaptive equipment that is utilized for personal use such as software installed on personal computers.

Postsecondary institutions are required to provide equal access. If computer equipment is provided for all students (e.g., in a computer lab) then AT must be provided that allows access to the hardware or software in those labs for individuals with disabilities.

- ✎ Requests for AT should be made as early as possible to allow the postsecondary institution enough time to acquire AT if not already available.
- ✎ Don't assume the institution already has a particular AT or adaptive equipment readily available.




Tips for Transitioning to Higher Education

Ask for an assistive technology evaluation while in high school.
Ask for a re-evaluation during senior year to provide to post secondary institution.
Experiment with various AT while in high school.
Research AT on-line for specific disability categories.
Apply to the Office for Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR). OVR may be able to provide an AT evaluation for eligible individuals.
Visit the various postsecondary schools that you have applied to and inquire about: (1) their knowledge of AT; (2) AT students with disabilities use most often; (3) how to access AT; (4) campus AT lab and its hours, available training; (5) AT available in "generic" computer labs?
During postsecondary tours, ask about the type of technology used in the classroom and Web-based courses.



Self-Pay and Other Resources

- Low-interest cash loans available through the PA AT Foundation (www.patf.us)
- "Previously owned" equipment (REEP)
- Charitable/disability organizations grants and gifts
- Go Fund Me and other social media



Any Questions?



Robert: AAC app & Visual Schedule

Today: High School and home

- Robert, 19, uses AAC in conjunction with a visual schedule to help him anticipate the sequence of events in his school day.
- Robert will start a part-time job this summer, digitizing records (scanning).
- Robert will graduate at 21, and hopes to continue in his job.

After Graduation: Competitive Employment

- Who will assure the use of this strategy and the use of AAC are documented so that the workplace will be aware?
- Who will create the visual schedule, add words to the AAC app, or coordinate with family to do so?
- Who will be able to model AAC with Robert in his work environment to help assure transfer of skills?



Krista: Dynawrite

Today: High School and home

- Krista uses a Dynawrite to communicate with unfamiliar partners. The school helped her procure the device three years ago, utilizing the School-Based Access program. She has excellent typing and spelling skills, so this device works very well for her.
- She graduates in June, and plans to attend Community College and major in English.

After Graduation: Post Secondary Education

- Who owns the device?
- Will she need it after she graduates?
- Can she keep this one?
- How will it be maintained?
- If she keeps this one and needs a new one in two years, how will she get it?



Malcom: Accent 1400

Today: High School and home

- Robby relies on his PRC Accent to communicate with both familiar and unfamiliar partners.
- The school purchased the device for him in 2012, based on a SETT Process (the slp customizes, programs, and trains Malcolm in use of the device)
- Malcolm is graduating in 2018, and hopes to receive supported employment services.

After Graduation: Supported Employment

- Who owns the device? Can he have it after he graduates?
- How will it be maintained?
- When might he need a new one?
- If he needs a new one after graduation, how will he get the device AND services (including evaluation)?



Increasing Independence with AAC



Telecommunication with Dedicated AAC Devices

- Dedicated speech-generating devices may give the option to create a Bluetooth



How well does this work?

I asked a friend, Ami P., who uses an Accent 1400, if he would mind giving me his input.

"Ok. It will cost you \$75. The phone works, the Bluetooth technology does cut off when the backlight shuts off. I was joking about the \$75."

How did I reach Ami to ask him?
Via Facebook Messenger on my mobile device!



Export your message from an AAC app

- to text messaging, Social Media, reminder apps, and email
- Be sure to add a picture in your **contact list** for each person



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Apps for Telecommunication

(Creating social connections for people with disabilities)

- Google hangouts (talk, text, & video)
- Google Duo (simplified video chat)
- Talkatone (talk & text)
- Glide
- Marco Polo
- Skype (video and messages)
- Facetime



- One advantage to Google apps is that they are cross platform and will work on both Android and Apple phones



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Hints for Successful AT Transition

- Revisit AT “early and often” in the IEP/ITP
- Understand ownership and funding, including future access
- Identify post-secondary goals ASAP, and explore AT needed to achieve them
- Pursue relationships with post-secondary world (e.g. volunteer positions; campus visits) to check out AT needs in the real world
- Develop relationships with OVR, DRP offices, etc.
- Find successful mentors with disabilities and learn the role of AT in their lives



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I like to believe my transition to adulthood, independent living and employment started to happen on the day my parents learned of my diagnosis of cerebral palsy

- Anthony Arnold (2007)



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PIAT Resources

- Access: Device lending and demonstrations
- Acquisition: TDDP and **iCanConnect**
- Reuse (REEP)
- Training
- Information and Assistance
- Public awareness
- Technical Assistance
- Collaboration



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Device Loans

Pennsylvania's Assistive Technology Lending Library

FREE program available to all Pennsylvanians with disabilities and older Pennsylvanians, regardless of age, disability, income, place of residence, or service system, who would like to try assistive technology devices prior to obtaining them.



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ON ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY**



FOR INFORMATION contact:

PIAT - Pennsylvania's Initiative on Assistive Technology

1755 N 13th Street, Suite 411,
Philadelphia, PA 19122

Tel: 800-204-7428 (voice)
866-268-0579 (TTY)

Fax: 215-204-9371

Email: ATinfo@temple.edu

Web:
<http://disabilities.temple.edu/piat>

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Also check out
<http://AACCommunity.net>



So, how do we plan for the transition of AAC devices?

- If a new device is to be obtained via insurance/Medicaid, plan for this to happen early enough for set up to take place well before graduation.
 - This may not be easy to do, but you want someone who knows the student and their system working on transferring those files

So, how do we plan for the transition of AAC devices?

- First ask, who owns the device? How was it obtained?