

- I'll turn it over to our presenter.

- Hello everybody.

My name is Caitlin Brown and I am a pediatric speech language pathologist.

I currently live in Lafayette, Georgia.

I was just talking to Jim.

A lot of people don't know where that is and that is okay.

If you're familiar with the South at all, we live in northwest Georgia.

It's about an hour and a half north of Atlanta and 45 minutes south of Chattanooga, Tennessee.

So small area, but it has really led me to developing in my career.

I have worked in private practice for five years, and then I've been in the school system for two years now.

And starting my career I did adults as well.

So I've been a little bit of everywhere.

So of course you know the title of our presentation.

I just wanna preface this with this presentation as a whole, I feel like we could spend hours talking about this and going, you know in depth into different examples and things like that, but of course, that's not the option and not the purpose of today.

So I've compiled what I think to be some of the most important pieces.

And my goal for you too is that I can give you something that you can turn around and hopefully put in practice in whatever setting you're in currently.

So like I said, I'm a pediatric SLP, I work very closely with our assisted technology specialist in our district, and we have launched what we consider or call a functional communication project.

It got a little off base.

We were planning on fully launching it this year, but they needed me to serve at another school.

And so we're using this year as more of a training year, and we're really working on educating all of our SLPs, getting them up to speed so that they're ready to help us implement it next year.

So the idea behind that is that we want all of our students to have access to some form of functional communication.

We want to make sure that we have no students that are leaving our district without some form of communication.

And then we're really driving home that early intervention model and really working on introducing it early when our kiddos start with us in our special education pre-K, which can start as

early as three years old.

But really, again, we just wanna make sure that those opportunities are available to all of our students.

So as you can see, and you've read about me, so I'm not gonna read this to you, but I do specialize in AAC, pediatric feeding disorders and childhood language disorders.

I currently serve as an adjunct professor at Brescia University.

I have been doing that now for a year and a half.

I also serve as a content expert for students at Rocky Mountain University of Health Professions.

And so I help other individuals that are seeking their doctorate, their clinical doctorate, and I help them with their capstone or their dissertation, if you will.

And I serve as a continuing education presenter.

I have done some work for speech therapy PD.

I have done this presentation, and then I've also done some work with podcast and a medical podcast.

So my friend and I are also working on a children's book.

So just a little fun background story about me.

Financial disclosures relevant is just that I am an adjunct professor at Brescia and then there are no non-relevant or non-financial relationships, our learning objectives.

So of course my goal for you is to be able to describe those different types of AAC with options of each.

So not only what are they, but what do they mean, how can I use them with my students? And then kind of being able to describe that scaffolding.

So where do I start, where do I go, okay, this didn't work.

What do I do next? And then identifying and describing different strategies to implement in the classroom setting, so again, that's our biggest target for today, right? That's probably why most of you're here.

So with that, I do have a few poll questions, and Jim is gonna launch those for y'all right now.

If you wouldn't mind answering them.

It just gives me a little bit of information about you.

And then the last poll question will let me know if there's something that you're struggling with in your schools or if there's something that you feel you could really use some help with.

And that way maybe I can tailor some of my examples to you.

Lots of SLPs, good to see everybody.

All right, Jim, do we wanna go ahead and go on to that next question?

- Sure.

- Okay.

- I'm so sorry, Caitlin.

I don't know that I have them all in here.

- That's okay.

I wonder if it would let us make a quick one or if we wanted, I'll tell you what, for the sake of time, and so we don't spend too much time on it.

I'll just kind of present that last question.

So I had a couple other questions, one of mine was just if you're actively working with individuals who are using aac, which I'm assuming most of you are because you're here, but my last question, and this is something that if you'd like to type in the chat box again, I'd like to kind of use this to drive some of my examples.

So my question for y'all is, are you running into a certain barrier with teachers, administrators, paraprofessionals, occupational therapists, physical therapists, another SLP in the district, are you running into any kind of barrier you feel that is really standing in your way of implementing AAC in the classroom or really inhibiting your ability to take it to the next level with your students? So again, y'all just kind of type that in the chat box and we'll just move right along.

I think that's okay.

Perfect.

Okay, and some of this we'll talk about as we go to.

Okay, so the first thing, again, very brief, what is AAC? So of course, most of y'all are familiar with this.

Some people don't know what the acronym stands for.

So you have Augmentative and Alternative Communication.

That augmentative is where we're supplementing that communication, so for example, if we have an individual who is able to use single words, but they're not able to engage in conversation or they struggle with answering those open-ended questions, using some form of AAC might be beneficial for them because that aids them in their communication, okay? And then alternative is of course, an alternative means of communication, this would be for, and this basically is going to be a replacement for their voice, okay? So these are individuals who might be non-verbal, or they may have had a stroke or a traumatic brain injury that has impaired that portion of the brain to the point that they cannot verbally communicate.

And so that's where AAC can come in and really help us.

One question that I think we have all been asked at least some point in our career, certainly regularly in mine, when I'm looking at starting the use of any form of AAC, my parents first question is, well, won't this delay their progress in their, you know, their gaining of verbal communication? Or is this going to replace their verbal communication, or, well, if we do this, then they'll never speak.

But actually the research shows, and hopefully you all know this, that it's quite the opposite.

AAC is known to actually increase that verbal output.

So then it just kind of talks about age, skills, timing.

So of course, age is certainly a factor.

The earlier you introduce the better, right? Because if we notice early on we're working with an individual, say they're two years old and we've got them in private practice, or even maybe you're seeing them at your early headstart, something like that, you can start introducing those things to them right away.

With the use of AAC, we often see a big decrease in those negative behaviors that we see from a lot of our students.

I don't know about y'all, but that is something I hear so often that behaviors and decrease communication go hand in hand, and while they do, that's not always the only cause, however, with the use of some form of ACC, we often do see a decrease in those negative behaviors because we're giving them an outlet.

We're giving them an opportunity to communicate, you know, to us, for us, with us, and then again, when we talk about age, if we have an individual, let's say for example, we have a student who has a apraxia of speech and it was late identified by giving them access to this speech generating device, we can not only give them that opportunity to engage with their peers because we know their cognitive level is appropriate and it's where it needs to be.

And so they're missing out on all of these communication opportunities because of their apraxia.

So by giving them, you know, the speech generating device or Pex, if it's appropriate, they're automatically able to have higher access to that communication that they didn't have previously.

Okay, I was just looking, sorry, I'm seeing the questions come in and the chats come in, so I'm trying to keep up with that, but not get too off base.

So skills, that's the next one.

And I noticed quite a few of these in the Q and A box and then in the chat box.

And this is something that I think across the nation, we face this as a difficult task.

So skills and training, that is something we hear all too often, specifically with our teachers, our administrators, and it's not for lack of trying always, it's just that it's unfamiliar.

AAC is certainly not new, but we know that there has been a greater surge in its use in the past years, I would say even in the past five years, I have done more speech generating device applications in the past three years than I did in my first three years in pediatrics.

So there's certainly a big shift, and we could talk again, we could talk about that for days as far as why that's happening, what we can do about it.

But what we need to remember and what's most important is the fact that we need to help these students.

We need to help these children, and we need to help their families because not only are these individuals struggling at school, but they're probably struggling at home with the same communication difficulties and behaviors, and their parents are probably struggling too.

So with that being said, a lot of times we as the SLPs have to pair with our assistive technology specialist in the district.

If your district doesn't have one, that's a little bit more difficult.

But I will say both AbleNet and other companies usually have some really good representatives that can aid you in that process as well and kind of be a good resource for you.

But there are so many opportunities out there for learning and teaching.

And so a lot of times what I find myself doing is making those resources, taking them to the teachers, explaining what that looks like, how they need to implement it, and then showing them how I use it in my sessions with those students.

So I have a picture of LAMP over here to the left, and that's a very common program a lot of us use, but it's not the only program, with that being said, there is a formal training, and so that's one that, for example, if you have a classroom that has multiple device users and they're all using LAMP, then it would be appropriate for the district to send that classroom teacher or teachers paraprofessionals to that training because not only does it teach them, you know, the ins and outs basics of the LAMP Program, but it also gives them the opportunity to ask questions.

It gives them kind of that troubleshooting map, and it teaches them why we're using that program.

And I know that we have found in our district, once that light bulb goes off for teachers and once it clicks, they're more apt to actually use it and try to use it in the classroom.

So I also encourage a lot of my teachers to take a device home with them.

So we have iPads with preloaded applications on them, and a lot of times I'll borrow a device from our assistive technology specialist and let my teachers take it home, play with it over the breaks, things like that, so that they have the opportunity to learn on their own.

Because a lot of us are very visual and tactile learners.

And so that's the best way to learn.

Let me see.

Yes, the next part is the SLPs.

And so this is one, this is a tricky one.

There's not necessarily a guide on this.

I know personally as an adjunct professor, this is a course that is now offered in most graduate programs.

But even when I was in school, this wasn't a program, this was not a class that we had to take in our graduate level program, we had exposure to it, of course, but it wasn't a class all, you know, in and of itself.

Whereas now in a lot of programs, it is.

So I think that the education side of it at the master's level is making a shift.

And I think that will help us a lot as far as that implementation out in the field.

But I will say just like what we're expecting out of our teachers, we should expect the same out of our treating and working SLPs in that if you have individuals on your caseload that need some sort of AAC intervention as a professional, it's also our job to seek out those educational opportunities.

And it's our job to seek out those continuing ed opportunities.

And there are a lot of free resources.

AbleNet is one of them.

PRC Saltillo has quite a few opportunities.

And then that's one, again, with all of the different continuing education opportunities out there nowadays, there are so many ways for SLPs to go about that.

But I will say something that we have seen to be beneficial in our district is those SLPs that do have the experience kind of taking that and guiding the younger or less experienced SLPs on how to do it, what to do.

Something that we're working on too is making a website that has all of these resources available to our SLPs so that when they have a question, when they need a quick first then board, they need a quick core nine word board, they can go to the website and access those materials and print them and laminate at their school.

This is also something that our assistive technology

specialists can do for them, but that way it's accessible to them quickly.

Okay.

I knew I was going to talk too much about this, and I joke with my students all the time that I go down a rabbit hole, so I keep looking at my time.

So as far as implementation in the schools, this just kind of talks about who might be involved, right? So of course our teachers, our general education teachers and special education teachers, because I think a lot of people kind of forget that just because a student is in the general education population, they might be in that co-taught setting, but they're school still in a general education class.

And so those teachers still need to know about it just as much as our special education teachers do.

Administrators, they have interactions with our children, right, they need to understand the, at least the very basics of whatever they might be using.

So if they're using a picture communication system, well, how does that child use that picture communication system to communicate? So are they at the level where they are just pointing to the picture, or are they actively taking the picture and giving it to their communication partner? So those kinds of things are really important for us to make sure that everybody stays on the same page so that when a, an administrator passes them in the hallway, they're able to engage with that student still just like they do all of our other students, so again, just like with anything, our goal is to be in the least restrictive environment and to provide equal opportunities for all of our students.

So with that being said, another something that can be done throughout the school is having those communication boards posted in different areas.

So for example, those frequented areas, right? So the lunchroom, the gym the art room, anywhere that those students might go outside of their classroom, they should have that same opportunity for communication.

And this also allows our device users, so our students that use those speech generating devices, let's say, because we see this happen all too often, let's say their device is dead and we have to charge it, but we go to gym first thing in the morning, well, hopefully you have one on standby, but that doesn't always happen, so if you don't, that's okay because there's a, there's a picture core word board in the gymnasium.

They can use that to communicate during gym.

And what we are trying to do too, is make sure that we have both core and fringe vocabulary words on those different boards,

so for example, in the gym, they'll have their same core words that they're used to accessing and using, but then they'll also have those fringe vocabulary words that would be specific to the gym, you know, so playing tag or playing ball or asking for a tricycle or a hula hoop or whatever it might be that you're not gonna need those same words in art class, but in art class, they're gonna need to be able to ask for paint or crayons or a paintbrush.

So having those opportunities available.

So again, I'm sorry, I'm trying to monitor all of these different things at the same time, and I promise I do have time at the end save for questions.

And so I plan to get to a lot of this as well.

So I won't go into all of this specifically.

I feel like we have a pretty good understanding at the end of the day, anyone that interacts with the student should have some sort of training and understanding in the use of AAC, okay.

Oops.

All right.

So this is just forms of AAC and implementation, and this just breaks it down, so we have our no tech, low tech and high tech options.

So your no tech that's considered unaided.

You'll hear it used two different ways in the literature.

So I went ahead and included both.

And then your low tech and high tech are both considered aided.

So for no tech, that that's gonna be the use of your gestures, your signs, facial expressions, pointing.

So a lot of people, and I heard this all the time in private practices, you know, parents would come in and they'd say, well, they don't communicate with me at all, and I'd say, oh, well, how, you know, how did they let you know that they're hungry? Well, they'd take me to the pantry and they point to what they want.

Well, they are communicating, they're just not doing it verbally, so they're pointing and they're using some form of communication.

It's just not that verbal communication that everybody expects when they think of communication.

So all of those things are no tech.

And this is one that I think is used as far as teaching these opportunities.

This is used a little bit more frequently with our younger students.

So the use of teaching, the use of signs and gestures is something that we generally do early on, but pointing is pretty important, especially if we're moving towards low tech and high



tech options, because we want to make sure that they're able to make selections.

So if they can't point to a desired picture or object, then you're probably going to struggle when you move to those next steps, right? So our next, and again, when we talk about the scaffolding of AAC, it is not cut and dry, it is not black and white.

You don't go from gestures to pictures to a speech generating device, now, that's the typical continuum, but you don't always have to go that route.

So if you see that the student has that potential, and let's say there's a student with apraxia, you may go straight to a speech generating device because you know that their language skills and their cognitive abilities are high enough to access that and be successful with that.

So you go straight to a speech generating device, that's appropriate.

We kind of debate this in our district because we talk about how our world is so technologically driven now that our students are motivated by technology.

They use technology every day throughout the school system, right? I don't know if y'all's are any different, but our students use their Chromebooks often.

They have iPads in the classroom that they're using for different activities, they're using Smart Boards, they're, you know, everything is changing.

And it is so technologically driven that a lot of times that is going to be a higher drive and a higher motivator for our students if we introduce a speech generating device or an iPad first rather than pictures.

However, if you have a student that uses your device as a basketball instead of a communication tool, you're probably gonna wanna scaffold that down and go to using some sort of pictures.

You also have to take into account what's your ultimate goal? So and meeting them where they're at.

So for example, if you have an individual or a student that they really struggle with, even being able to identify the difference between, let's say a toothbrush and a fork, and you show them these two things and you ask, which one do we use to eat? And they can't show you, then again, you're going to have to scaffold down because they're not gonna be able to go to a speech generating device and go into eat and tell you that they need a fork because they don't have that understanding that we use a fork to eat.

So you have to really assess where a student is and make those professional judgment calls.

And that's one where I think a lot of SLPs get a little, what's the word I'm looking for, they're a little intimidated by that, because that means that you really have to do a lot of that exploration, and it does take more time, it really does.

But at the end of the day, once you find what works for that student, and as soon as you see that light bulb go off for that student where, oh my gosh, this makes sense, I pick this picture and I get what I want, or I pick this picture and the teacher knows that I want to stop, or I need a break, and they get that break and they don't escalate to that behavior, then it's, again, it's just amazing how things can change for that student and for that child.

So again, there's not a, it's not cut and dry.

It is not, you always have to move in this order, but this is something that you get to use your professional judgment on.

And then the other thing to remember is that just because you start with PEX, that doesn't mean you always have to stay with PEX.

You can move to a speech generating device, if you see that, okay, well they need a more robust vocabulary and I can't do that through, excuse me, through PEX, then you're gonna move to that speech generating device, right? Likewise, if you're using a speech generating device and you're really not getting the responses or the progress that you would like to see, step back down to pictures, there's nothing wrong with that.

It should be a fluid back and forth, and again, the idea is that they understand and are able to use both.

So if they're a speech generating device user, we want them to be able to use pictures because we want them to know that those same communication opportunities may not always be available, right? They may forget their device at home one day, it may not be charged.

We may not have a charger and they may have to use pictures that day.

So we wanna make sure that they do understand that process.

Excuse me.

Okay.

This just goes into what I consider our best practices.

And again, this is compiled from research.

This isn't just from my brain.

So the first one is access, and I've kind of touched on this, but this is all day at all times in all environments.

So should a student just be using their device when they're in a speech, a speech therapy session with you? Absolutely not, they should be using it in the classroom.

They should be using it when they go to block or specials.

They should be using it in the lunchroom.

Everywhere they go all day, they should have access to some form of communication.

Again, that device may not be able to go with them yet to PE because they get too rowdy or whatever it may be.

With that being said, we have the boards and they're able to use that communication board when they're in PE.

So there's still a way for them to access communication.

The next one is modeling, so of course, exposure.

So just like we talk about with our early intervention kids, and when we're working with a child with a just a language delay, what do we tell our parents? Model, expose them, express yourself.

Talk about everything you're doing, what you're doing, how you're doing it, what you're using to do, whatever it might be.

Talk about what they might be thinking, what they're trying to tell you, what you're thinking, all of those things.

Because a lot of the times when you share that with them, they're going to turn around and want to share that information with you, and that again, provides more communication opportunities on their end.

Okay? And then it talks about core vocabulary.

So consists of about 200 words, give or take, depending which core vocabulary system you follow.

But it does comprise 80% of what we say.

And I know that seems crazy because when you look at a core vocabulary list, you think, well, that's not a very robust vocabulary, but it's not necessarily about having a robust vocabulary, it's about having access to functional words that they can use daily in multiple situations.

So for example, out, on, off, more, want.

Those are just very basic examples, but think about how many times you could model the word want in a day.

So they may not be able to come out and say, I want water, I want a break, I want to go to the gym.

But they can tell you want, or they can point to it on their communication board.

And that in and of itself is more functional than trying to teach them a specific word such as bathroom, because the opportunities to use the word want are far more in number in a single day than the single word of bathroom.

Okay? And then core and fringe vocabulary, we'll talk about this a little bit later as well, and I think a lot of you do understand the difference, but again, that core vocabulary, those are gonna be the words that we use most often in the English language, fringe vocabulary, those are words that are specific to a certain environment or to the specific child, so for example, if you have a child who loves dinosaurs and

goldfish, well, those are two words that you're going to make sure are accessible to them because they may want to be able to tell you that they want their dinosaurs or they want goldfish for a snack.

So those fringe vocabulary words are important to the student, and we need to make sure that those are accessible.

Likewise, we talked about how in the gym you're going to have those fringe vocabulary words such as ball and tricycle and hula hoop.

On the flip side, you're not gonna have those same fringe vocabulary words in art or computer, right? Okay.

And then communication opportunities.

So what makes the most sense for me, and this was shared with me by actually one of, one of my representatives from another company, is that if we only expose our students and provide them with communication opportunities two times a week for 30 minutes in their speech therapy sessions, it would take them until they were 84 years old to serve as functional communicators using their device or their pictures.

So that one really stuck in my brain, okay? Because you know, just as difficult as it is for us to get our teachers on board and get our parents on board, if they're not using it in the classroom and they're not using it at home, there's only so much that we can do, right, we only have them for 30 minutes.

We can't fit 200 opportunities into 30 minutes, we can try, we can try our very best, and sometimes we might do it, we might just be having a rockstar day, but for the most part, that's not going to happen.

We have to provide those opportunities in all of their environments, okay? So again, the idea is that they need at least 200 opportunities every single day to use their system.

And we'll talk about how we're gonna do that.

So I broke this down, again, I work in an elementary school.

I worked in a middle school last year.

The only school setting I have not done yet is high school, but I have done middle, elementary and headstart, pre-K, the whole, the whole shooting match.

So I broke this down into what would be most familiar for a pre-K or an elementary setting.

And this just kind of gives us examples of when we can incorporate the use of AAC into these individual times.

Okay, and some of these are going to seem like, well, duh, we would do that anyway, but you would be amazed how often these opportunities are going missed because it's easier to just, oh, come on in, Susie, come have a seat at your desk and get started on your morning work, well, you missed out on at least five different communication opportunities from the time that Susie

arrived.

Because right off the bat, there's your greeting.

You said hello to her, she should have the opportunity to say hello back to you, right? Commenting on the night, their night before, or if it's a Monday, commenting on their weekend.

So asking her, how was your weekend? What did you do? Even asking what was one fun thing you did last night? And allowing them to communicate that, making their lunch choice, so I know that for our students, they do this every single day.

They come in and they sit down and as soon as they get started on their morning work, right after morning announcements, they go right into making that lunch choice.

These students that are struggling with communication, they may be non-verbal, they should have the same options, they should have the same opportunities, okay? So being able to make those, make those selections and then just engaging with their peers, right? These kids come in and we have to like wrangle them, so our communication and AAC users are no different.

They are still kids, they want to engage with their peers, they want to talk to their peers.

Some of them not so much and we have to encourage it, but that's okay.

That still offers us as the educator or the provider, the opportunity to teach them ways that we could use their device, ways that we could communicate with their peers, ways to increase those pragmatic language skills, okay? Then we go into literacy, this is probably, I would say one of the easiest ways for our teachers to incorporate AAC in the classroom.

So if there is one place you want to start, I think that literacy would be the easiest because there are a lot of resources out there where people have already done the work, okay? You can access different stories that have core words in them.

So again, there are so many resources out there, so you don't necessarily have to reinvent the wheel, but this offers the opportunity for the child to request specific stories.

They can comment throughout the book, again, we may have those targeted vocabulary words.

So whatever words you may be using, if you're using symbol sticks or specific pictures, excuse me, from LAMP, whatever it may be, your icons, you can tape them in the book.

And then your students can go through and read with you.

And of course the idea is that eventually they would start reading the story to the point where you're still reading it, but they're filling in the blank with what that core word is with their device, okay? And then of course, those comprehension questions post-reading.

So this is gonna be for your higher grade levels where they are at the point of doing those comprehension questions, but asking those questions about the story and them being able to respond.

And again, it's important for us to remember that it's not necessarily about their ability to give us a phrase or a sentence with their device.

If they can respond to that question by accessing one single word on their device, that's progress, right? Because they're responding to an open-ended question, they're hearing what you asked them, they're so they're comprehending that question, then they're formulating their answer, going to their device, selecting that answer, and communicating that to you, the teacher or the para-pro or the SLP, okay? Then we go into math.

This is one where you can use with money time calculations on any of these devices you have the areas where you can, it has all the different numbers, it has time broken down.

Best thing about these devices is that you can tailor them to best meet the needs of your students.

Same goes for pictures, right? So if you're working on time with a student, and let's say they're not at the point where they're using a device, well that's perfect.

You can get an old fashioned clock or make a clock, laminate it, and let them move the hands of the clock right? You can work on it that way, and then again, from the standpoint of using a speech generating device, if you're asking them a specific question about what time it is, making sure that they have access to that, or if you're working on money, making sure that they have access to that.

Making sure that all of those different opportunities are present for them on their device, okay? And then of course, lunch, some of these are pretty like lunch, recess centers.

So requesting different objects or going through the lunch line and telling the cafeteria workers what it is that they are wanting for lunch.

That's something I did a lot in the middle school because we were really transitioning to that functional piece where I wanted them to go out into the school and use their devices.

So they had to go through the lunch line and tell them what they wanted.

Now we went over it before we got to the lunch line, they knew what their options were, and some students, we even went through and we did like preloaded messages.

And then when they got to the lunch line, they were able to just say their message and get their lunch tray, okay? But commenting, engaging with their peers, communicating with adults, all of those things are things that we would want to incorporate.

So think, you know, to pre-k kindergarten, this is more center time, but even during activities for your upper grades, there are so many different opportunities for communication.

Think about how you engage your typically-developing students, right? You're going to ask them.

So for example, one of our kindergarten classes, they were working on making Santa's toy bag.

So perfect question, what goes in our toy bag? Well, that's a question that any of our students can answer.

They can go to their device, they can pick on, they can click play, they can click toys, and then they can pick what would go in Santa's toy bag.

So they can engage just like their peers and that's the goal and I think that that's the hardest thing to really get teachers to understand is that it might feel like a little bit more work on the front end, but the appreciation and the inclusion that can come from that and from the use of their device, you will see students flourish in the classroom just because they feel like they're being included, okay? Of course, recess it, this is one too where you can kind of tailor it to be what you need.

So I put on there having a fanny pack or a small resource.

I have made quite a few little, like little badge reels, if you will from my teachers where they have a few core words and fringe words for the playground that they take out there on their lanyards to the playground so that their students can use that if they need to.

Our goal is for our, all of our playgrounds to have outdoor communication boards, but that's, you know, work and process that costs a little bit more.

But that is something that you can certainly do.

And then if you have a device user and they're taking their device on the playground, have a preloaded page where they go to, you know, they go into the school page, you can make a new page for recess.

And it has all these different options, so, you know, let's say your playground has a gaga ball pit, has monkey bars, has a slide, has swings, put whatever options they have out on the playground on there, maybe they wanna sit and read a book.

That can be an option too, if that's something that your school allows, so again, tailoring it to those students, but also to the opportunities that they do have.

And then of course, encourage, just like any other student, we have to encourage them to use it or to talk about it.

All of those different pieces.

And then block and special, we kind of talked about this, so we call it block at our school, but that those are our special classes like PE and computer, art, music, things like that.

So having those preloaded pages can be very beneficial in these settings because they can go straight to that communication board for that class.

Now they'll still use their core word boards as they go through, but they have those main vocabulary options to choose from that would be appropriate for that class, okay? And that can really help with your younger students a lot too.

Again, having those large access boards so when they walk into the classroom, they have that access no matter what.

Small resources are really good too.

This is really great for our younger kids because it's almost like once you get 'em sit, you know, seated at a table, we don't wanna move 'em.

So you may wanna take just a small little communication board with them and it sits at their table with them, okay.

And then same kind of thing, those commenting, requesting turn taking and engaging, okay.

Alright.

So I don't think we're gonna have time because I wanna save enough time for questions because y'all are a very chatty group and I would love to talk with you.

So I'm not gonna share these two different videos, but they are on the handout, so y'all feel free to go and watch them.

There are just two different examples of how some teachers could use these resources in the classroom.

And then the smore link, that third link that is just a really good resource that kind of gives some examples of what you can show your teachers as how they might incorporate different things in the classroom.

And then again, using that Smart Board, I'm not sure how familiar everybody is with green screen activities, but the green screen activities, this is one that is becoming more and more common.

A lot of these are accessible through Teachers Pay Teachers nowadays.

And there are just so many opportunities where it's an interactive scene, okay? So it might be like, we have one where a little boy is on his way to school, and so it's asking, well, how does he get to school? And so the first one is a skateboard, and the students have to answer, you know, does he use a skateboard to get to school? No, and so they have to tell us no, whether, again, whether it be verbal picture with their device, and then eventually it gets to how they get to school.

And then the teacher would turn around and ask them, well, how do you get to school? And they have to tell us like the bus or the car, you know, mom, dad, whoever it might be.

And then having those visuals.



This is something that is probably one of the most important things, and if I told you a key takeaway, something that you could turn around and implement tomorrow, it would be some sort of visual representation in your classroom or in your, you know, your students classrooms where they have an opportunity to see what it is that you're expecting of them.

So those visual schedules, a first then board can be a fabulous resource and often helps with a lot of behaviors.

So having that visual of, first we're going to do work, then you get to do, you know play-doh or magnet tiles or whatever may be next.

And then also having those visuals available to them right off the bat, so symbol sticks is one we use often.

And lesson picks is a very common outlet.

That's something that you do have to pay for, but it is relatively cheap.

A lot of times districts will do like a group sale for that or a group purchase, and you can make those different picture cards based on what you feel like you might need for your students.

That's also something core, so then we go into the core word of the week, and I'll touch on this because I do have a good resource for you on this as well.

So your core word of the week, obviously the idea behind this is that you pick a specific core word and you focus on it throughout the week.

So you would, you know, you would have it posted throughout your classroom, you would use it in the different areas that you're teaching that week and try to expose and model that word as many times as possible.

And also turning around and showing those students how to use it on their devices or with their own pictures, okay? And so I'm gonna go ahead and go to my reference page while we're talking about this.

So this the Center for AAC and Autism Core Word of the Week.

This is a PDF and it, it's a very extensive PDF I wanna say it's about 100 pages, but it gives you examples and ideas of how to really incorporate that core word of the week.

Okay, now I get to do some questions.

I know we technically only have 10 minutes left, but let me see what I can get to.

So a lot of y'all have been very chatty in the chat box, but also in the q and a.

Okay, so let's see.

Okay, let me just answer some of these questions.

Okay.

Okay so this one says there's a student undiagnosed who presents as a child with selective mutism, no special ed

services, first grade, they talk with me, some peers, and a few select other adults.

What type of AAC could be provided to ease the stress and allow the teacher to assess the student effectively? So this is one, we actually, interestingly enough had this exact situation here at my school, and we started with a core, just a core word board for him.

And then we also had fringe vocabulary words that would be fitting for him, things that he would want to request.

The difficult part is when you're looking at truly assessing them, so my question back to you might be, is he, although he has selective mutism, is he able to answer those questions, you know, via written or is he answering those questions on the computer, I know he's in first grade, so that's kind of like that tricky year where, I mean, they're still learning to really spell and write and so that might be difficult for him.

So that would be one where it wouldn't, it also wouldn't hurt to introduce a speech generating device as long as the parents would be on board with that.

And sometimes you really have to try it and see what works.

We joke and say that trial and error is what we do in AAC, but really it is, because no one child is the same.

So what works for one child doesn't always work for the other.

So I would certainly start with at a minimum a core communication like picture system where he's able to communicate those basic wants and needs.

And then again, have some of those fringe vocabulary opportunities for him where he can communicate about things that are interesting to him or some, you know, things that might come up frequently for him in the day.

And then if we see that that's beneficial, then you could certainly move towards, you can certainly move towards a speech generating device if you feel like that's important.

Okay.

Can you give more information about your functional communication project? Let's chat about that after.

Some of the teachers that I work with are struggling.

If there are several different AAC devices that are being used in their classroom, do you have any suggestions or tips that could provide to help them navigate that? So I'm guessing that you mean they're using, like you may have one student using Touch chat and one student using LAMP.

And so if that's the case, at the end of the day, your best bet is going to be doing really driving home those core words and that core vocabulary.

Because regardless of what type of device or platform or application you're using, those core words are going to be the

same across the board.

Their location on the device may not be the same, but they're all going to be on those devices somewhere.

Okay, so that's where I would recommend to start with that.

And then if, you know, if you see that, okay, they're ready for more in depth or they need a little bit more higher level, then that's certainly something that you could adjust, and really that's the nice thing.

Again, like I said, all of these devices can be tailored to the individual students.

So if there's a specific lesson that they're doing in the classroom, they can go through.

And again, this requires a little bit more time and effort.

And I know that, God love them, our teachers are already so overwhelmed with their responsibilities, but if they do this work on the front end, it will pay off in the long run because it will already be preloaded on their devices.

So if they have a lesson that they're doing, they could go on to the different devices and make a page that would be appropriate for the specifics in that lesson.

So again, they would still be, they would still have access to those core words and they could use those functionally throughout the lesson.

But then when they start, excuse me, asking those specific questions about the lesson, the individual device users can go to that specific page on their device and access it that way.

I would love some examples of when and what activities to incorporate high tech AAC in the preschool classroom.

So this was early on, I feel like we kind of addressed that some, again, your core words are going to be your best place to start with that, especially in preschool, because they still are, they're gaining that vocabulary.

So doing core word of the week is usually a really good place to start with preschool, especially in high tech settings because it's so functional and it's really easy to do across the board with all of those different device users, so.

Let's see, ideas for funding AAC for resource poor schools.

This is a tricky one.

I will say you have some different options.

So of course I, I'm guessing that you're referencing in that you're wanting to be able to do trials with the individuals and you're hoping to have devices that you could use in your county before moving forward with the funding process for the individual students, and if that's the case, I will say reach out to different, I'm not sure how close you are to a big or bigger city.

For example, for us, we have a place in Chattanooga, Tennessee

called Signal Centers.

And they are a company that specifically supplied different forms of AAC, whether it be switches or actual devices, different things like that.

They have so many different opportunities and you can rent these different things through them and you can use them for the duration that you might need it, and then you would return it when you're ready to, you know, move forward with that device application for the student.

So there might be something like that.

Even grant funding would be another route to go.

And then certainly reach out to your different funding resources, so AbleNet and PRC Saltillo, because a lot of those companies, of course do the trial periods.

And so by doing that trial period, yes, it can get a little sticky and typically you only get the device for, you know, a month or two or three months depending on their insurance.

But most of those companies will grant you an extension if you put in that request and indicate why you're needing that extension.

So that could be a really good route for you as well.

No access to a device to practice on.

So that is one, I've had a lot of people personally purchase the specific app, if you have an iPad, wait until Better Speech and Hearing month in May.

And that is when a lot of times they'll run like a 50% off special and certainly talk with your district about it because you'd be amazed where these like special random funds come from.

But a lot of times they have the funds for those different things, but a lot of people just don't know because they haven't asked about it.

And maybe some, not sometimes, not to the people that would be able to give that okay.

Student has damaged two school owned iPads for communication, teacher wants student to have access to high tech.

But an IEP currently is picture symbols, low tech, what do you recommend? That's like my student that used the device as a basketball, so here's my opportunity to really pump up AbleNet.

But they have a five year warranty and so they will quite literally overnight you a device if something happens to the child's device.

So if you go through the process of doing that through AbleNet and doing the funding application, then the child would have their own device.

And if something does happen to it again, they will overnight it, they will get that child a new one.

But if it, do you feel like it's because my thought is do you

feel like it's because they are too rough with it or they're having trouble accessing it? So if they're having trouble using it effectively, then that's a whole other ballgame.

And that might be where pictures are more appropriate and you as the SLP need to really work and educate that teacher on what would be the most appropriate form of communication for that student.

However, if it's just because they're a little bit rough with the device or when they get upset, they're rough with the device, there are different avenues you can go with that, so again, like I said, AbleNet does have that five year warranty and that can be very helpful.

For example, with our students who get combative or may throw things when they get angry or upset, if we know that about a student, then instead of possibly giving them that opportunity to hurt the device, you could remove the device and then give them a communication board.

So replace it with that low tech option when they, when those behaviors are getting escalated and then it takes the potential for damage to the device out of the equation.

So that might help some too.

Okay, I know we're out of time or yes, so if you have to go, I understand.

I'll certainly stay on and keep answering questions for any of you that would like to stay though, is that, is that okay Jim?

- Yes, absolutely.

If anybody that is leaving is looking for ASHA CEUs, know that assessment link will be in the email tomorrow.

You should also be redirected once you close out of the meeting.

If you have any issues though, email me at [ableu@ablenetinc.com](mailto:ableu@ablenetinc.com).

All right, thanks.

- Okay, so for those of you that are still on, let's see, current challenges, none of us, including the speech therapists, seem to know how to develop language skills for these students, no curriculum strategies, how to transition from cards to iPads.

My first thing would be seek out different educational opportunities because that's where you're going to gain a lot of information.

And as far as your curriculum, you're still going to follow a lot of the curriculum-based information that you have from your schools, but you're going to tailor it to those individual students.

And this is one that my assistive technology specialist and I really drive home and we talk about all the time, is that, again, you have to meet your individual students where they're at, but if their language skills are very like underdeveloped, then you're not gonna be ready for a typical kindergarten curriculum and you need to work, excuse me, more on that functional communication, driving home that functional communication piece.

So that would be one, I would really encourage you to look at the core word of the week.

Again, that really gives so many good activities and it literally outlines it for you on what you need to do and how to do it.

And so if you have nothing and nowhere to start, that can be a really good place to start, okay.

Let's see.

A good goal for classroom teachers and paras that have just been introduced to AAC.

That would be, I mean, if we're talking an IEP goal, I could probably come up with one on the fly, but an overall good goal would be to just increase the number of modeling opportunities and access opportunities for their students.

So the goal would be starting out from the very basic, let's say their goal is to incorporate the use of AAC into one activity that they do every day in the classroom.

So because if you go to them with that list that we went through today of arrival and reading and math and lunch, and if you go to them with that, they're gonna be so overwhelmed and they're not gonna do any of it, whereas if you go to them and you start with the arrival section, okay.

And you say you want to make sure that you give your children the opportunities to greet you, make their lunch choice with their device or their pictures, and say one thing about their day before.

You're giving them three communication opportunities first thing in the morning, and if they meet those three, you know, let's say for a week.

Great, let's add a new opportunity the next week.

So that's kind of how I would start, would be that small and work up to, okay.

I work in a high school and also support students in the transition program.

Implementation of a AAC for functional communication was previously inconsistent or missing for several students.

I know it's never too late, but it is very difficult to increase motivation, to initiate communication, shape long-term behaviors and use alternative ways to communicate now to

appreciate any ideas or strategies.

Yes, so that is one where we, again, this is kind of where our drive for the functional communication project started was we were noticing that we had individuals who we were graduating and sending them out into the world with little to no communication opportunities.

And so we felt, you know, well that's unacceptable because there are so many resources out there nowadays, and so I think that a lot of it, as far as once you get to the high school age, motivation is key.

So you have to find what's motivating and interesting to the child and then use that and run with it.

So if your goal is to get them to talk about, you know, what they're gonna buy at the store, but that's not interesting to them or motivating to them, then you're essentially beating your head against a wall, right? So find things that are motivating and interesting to them.

Talk about those things first.

Use those as your building blocks.

And then once they kind of see that, you know, you're here to help them and you're here to aid them in this process, a lot of times you can get a little bit further with what you're wanting to, what you're wanting to target as well.

Okay.

Let's see.

Okay, more information about the consideration process for the continuum of AAC, who and when they would be a good candidate for high tech.

That is one, again, that's a little bit tricky because we, we do a lot of work.

As you get more and more comfortable with aac, you start to kind of move about that continuum on your own.

But if you're just really getting started, I would definitely recommend starting out with starting out with the pictures, that's a quick and easy way to kind of do that.

But then if you see that you're not getting anywhere, or you see that they're not motivated, then try the speech generating device.

So I don't necessarily, I wouldn't say I have a rule as far as number of sessions, but let's say I've had five sessions with a student or an individual where I, you know, they're not having a total meltdown, like they're having a relatively decent day and it was a pretty good session.

If I feel like I haven't seen some sort of progress or initial like initiative on their part with whatever I may be using, then I'm gonna step back and try something different.

Okay.

And again, it's different for every therapist.

Some people think that that's not enough.

And for some students it's not.

Some students need more exposure before they're ready to make an adjustment.

But at the school age, a lot of times if you've presented something five times and you're getting no feedback from the student, you might wanna try something different, okay.

Link the list of core vocabulary so we can share with families and teachers, yes, Jim, you can help me with how to do that because I don't think, I don't think I included that on the handout.

So, but I'm happy to share that, so I can give you, I can give you that link from my reference page if you'd like.

- If you wanna send me that link, I can include it in the auto email that'll go out tomorrow.

- Perfect, I will do that.

I'm just gonna stop my share with y'all.

Let's see.

I only work with AAC users in their everyday environments.

Is there a reason to see them in a one-on-one setting? Not necessarily.

That's one that a lot of districts now do a lot of push in work, and so they're in their natural environment, in their everyday environment.

So really you could use this to your advantage and help the teachers and help the student by incorporating those different core instruction pieces, if you will.

So seeing them in a one-on-one setting, it just really, it district to district is different.

And then especially like for a lot of us, for our younger students, they may need more of that one-on-one small group setting outside of the general education classroom, especially when we're trying to really start training them on how to use any kind of AAC, it just really depends, so, but no, you certainly don't have to see them separately.

The preloaded pages.

So this question was just, what are the preloaded pages? If you're familiar with any of the speech generating devices, there are of course pages on your device.

So for example, on LAMP, you have that main front page, right, and then let's say you click on the play button, the dice, you click on play and it generates you to the next page.



Excuse me, and then on that next page, it has different opportunities where they can say, play just that they want to play, or it has an option where they can click on toys or games.

So that could be one where under toys, you may want to go in and edit that page and take away toys that are either not going to be available to them if they have a difficult time understanding why they can't have something.

Or you may want to go in and add toys that are available to them.

So things that are options, things like that.

And then as far as when I talk about these preloaded pages and having these pages ready to go for like block or something like that, again, for example, you go to the school tab and then you can, you can go into the edit a page and add a page, or you can just add a button and make that button take you to a new page, and on that new page it could, and you could just have a page that has block or specials, and then it has all of the different vocabulary in it.

But if you have a student that has difficulty really differentiating between one class and a different class, it might be more beneficial to have two separate pages.

So have a button where they go in to block and then they pick, you know, PE, music, art, and then that opens up the new fringe vocabulary words for them.

Let's see.

Any resources on how to advocate for yourself, to your superiors for programming time? AAC takes substantial programming and prep time and admin just could care less.

Whew, that is a tricky one because you're absolutely right.

Programming takes a lot of time, and if you let it, it will eat up your therapy session.

That is one where it depends how confrontational you want to be, I guess.

So for me, I would take it to my admin and present it in a sense of, you know, we have the opportunities to communicate freely with one another by using our voices, but unfortunately, my so-and-so student does not have that opportunity.

So they're using this device, and in using this device, you know, they have to, we have to make different pages and we have to make different icons, and I have to set them up to be successful throughout the school.

And you know, and talking up through it that way, a lot of times I have found that it's not so much that your superiors and your admin don't care, it's more that they don't understand.

So getting them to understand what it is that you're trying to do and why you need that time.

And a lot of times actually showing them, so take the device

with you and show them how long it takes to make a new page with all these new buttons and showing them that can often kind of open their eyes and they're like, oh, wow, that really does take a long time.

Maybe you do need a little extra time.

And and even just, you know, asking to start small, like if they could give you an extra hour a week or even an extra 30 minutes and then build on that based on however many kids you may have on your caseload.

What if our self-contained classrooms are essentially not using any curriculum, including literacy? I feel like these classes are so underserved due to teacher knowledge, skill, and effort.

We see this too.

I will say, of course, in just like in any setting, you're going to have, you're going to have different teachers that are more motivated and more proactive than others.

But with that being said, you can really be an advocate for your students.

I'm so sorry, that's our that's our bell, which that's kind of my almost bell as well, because I will have to log off shortly for, so that I can go and get my son, but with that being said, I would really, again, start small.

So start with the, that core word, the core word curriculum can really be a huge asset for you and can really help you.

And then as far as literacy, start small.

Have them read, I mean, it doesn't have to be, you know, we're working on reading comprehension or listening comprehension, no, it could just be that the teacher reads a book to the students.

Now, are you gonna have a lot of buy in and a lot of attention from your students, maybe not.

But the more that you do it and the more you expose them to it, you might see a little bit of change there.

So that's kind of, again, just like what we were talking about earlier, start small, give your teachers very small and direct things to do.

And a lot of times you will see higher activity and higher just participation, if you will, by giving them a single something to work on first and then increasing that difficulty, okay.

Okay, I wish I had time to answer all of these.

Let's see, the unique cur curriculum is fabulous.

Yes, Diane, this is one, A lot of our teachers use this.

A lot of our CBE teachers use this, and this is fabulous.

So if you're unfamiliar with this looking look into unique, and that's U-N-I-Q-U-E.

What if the barrier is the student's desire to use their AAC device, the student's verbal so AAC supports verbal communication.

That's one where, that's a tricky question too, because you want them to have that opportunity.

But at the end of the day, if the student is able to communicate with you what they're trying to say through their verbal communication, then that's appropriate, however, if they're not able to communicate that to you verbally, and you're trying to get them to use the device and they're not wanting to, that's a different story.

And I'm kind of guessing that's what you're talking about.

So with that being said, that's one that, oh, it's tricky because again, it's kind of like the high school students.

You have to find something that's motivating for them.

So more than like likely what has happened is that they have worked with the device and they've used the device purely for labeling or single words, or they've been forced to use it even when they've been using their words.

So we see that a lot, and that really drives our students in the opposite direction, and so when that happens, you're kind of digging yourself out of a hole.

But again, find something that's motivating for them.

And I would take that and run with it.

Let's see, I'll tell you what, Jim, would you be able to provide my email as well?

- I'm trying to think of the best way to do that.

We could put it in the chat.

- Okay, just because I feel like there were quite a few of you that wanted to talk more about our functional communication project.

And I would be happy to share more information about that with you.

But unfortunately, like I said, I don't have time today, but I will, I will put that in the chat right now so that you all have access to me and making sure I spelled it correctly.

So please feel free to reach out to me and I would be happy to talk more, like I said about that functional communication project that we have launched.

And if you have any questions that I didn't get to today, I would love to answer those questions.

So feel free to email me.

Did you say it didn't come through? Let's see, here we go.

That should get it.

- All right, well, I hope you all have a wonderful rest of your

day, and I hope wonderful Christmas.

If I didn't get to your questions, please email me and I would be happy to answer them.

- All right, thank you, Caitlin.

Thank you for staying the extra time and answering all those questions, thank you for the wonderful presentation.

Thank you for everybody for attending and having such a great chat.

There were a lot of resources I saw on that chat.

Just a reminder, if you're looking for ASHA CEUs, there is a short assessment, please complete that.

You'll also receive a link to that tomorrow if you don't need those, ASHA CEUs, you will get a certificate of completion tomorrow in your email.

If you have any questions, of course, you can always email [ableu@ablenetinc.com](mailto:ableu@ablenetinc.com).

com, thank you everyone, have a great day.