CONSIDERATIONS FOR COMMUNICATION PARTNERS

Presented by Rachael Langley, MA, CCC-SLP, October 21, 2025 / AbleNet Webinar

What is "AAC Modeling"?

- AAC modeling means we are teaching words and how they work.
- We show that AAC is a valid and accepted way to communicate.
- We demonstrate or show a skill on AAC by drawing attention to certain symbols.
- We connect AAC symbols to meaningful people, items, feelings, or experiences.

The field of AAC has ample research supporting modeling as a foundational component of AAC implementation (Allen et al., 2017; O'Neill et al., 2018; Sennott et al., 2016).

How language develops

- The primary goal of AAC modeling for emergent communicators is to build their receptive language.
- Language flourishes in supportive environments. Early childhood learning programs emphasize this - like Hanen's parent coaching, Greenspan's Floortime, and in the field of AAC, Goossens', Crane, & Elder's "Engineering the Classroom" resource.

Key features of a language-rich environment:

- A variety of interesting and engaging toys, tools, and materials to talk about
- Ample opportunities to communicate
- Books and opportunities to share stories

AAC is a language-learning tool we can add to this environment.

Refining AAC Modeling

When do we model?

- When you model AAC, let the device speak first.
- Be mindful of competing voices. We can only process one message at a time.

What do we say?

- Infant-directed speech (or "motherese") is slower, animated, and grammatical.
- Add enough information to provide context.
- Include complete, grammatical messages in your AAC modeling.

Quality over quantity

- Intentional, high-quality moments are more powerful than nonstop narration.
- AAC modeling is most valuable when the moment is meaningful to the learner.
- Be flexible! Model for connection.

References

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