Increasing Student Voice: Meaningful Augmentative Alternative Communication (AAC) use for academic and social success

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West Linn-Wilsonville School District

- Mission Question: *How do we create learning communities for the greatest thinkers and most thoughtful people...for the world?*

- Vision Themes:
  - Academic Excellence
  - Personalized Education
  - Community Partnerships
  - Circle of Support
  - The Whole Person
  - Integrated Technology
WLWV Student Services Focus Areas

- **Improving Instructional Practices**
  - Assessment for Student Learning
  - Student Engagement & Purpose
  - Curriculum & Pedagogy

- **Creating Inclusive Cultures**
  - Gen/SpEd Collaboration
  - Belonging through Co-Curricular Activities
  - Every Student’s needs met at home school

- **Increasing Student Voice**
  - Developing Growth Mindset
  - Student Involved IEPs
  - Every Student Effectively Communicates

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Equity & Access: Hearing Every Student’s Voice

- **We believe**
  
  “Every student has the tools and opportunities to communicate effectively about his/her learning, needs, interests, preferences in school and in the community”
  
  ○ *WLWV’s Special Education Focus Areas, Increasing Student Voice*

  “Engagement strategies encourage equitable and purposeful student participation and ensure that all students have access to, and are expected to participate in, learning”

  ○ *WLWV’s Instructional Framework, The 5 Dimensions of Teaching and Learning*
Equity & Access: Hearing Every Student’s Voice

- Some students may need additional tools (AAC) to help enhance their communication.

- The American Speech and Hearing Association’s (ASHA) definition of AAC “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.”

AAC systems

- AAC system can range from simple to more complex:
  - Paper and pencil
  - Communication boards
  - Communication books
  - Low-tech devices
  - High-tech devices
Equity & Access: Hearing Every Student’s Voice

• **We believe**
  
  • All students have the ability to be active participants in their educational setting
  
  • All staff and students have the ability to learn and support using AAC and AT in the classroom setting

• Across 15/16 schools, WLWV currently has 40-44 students using or trialing AAC systems

• ~29 students have their own devices/system
Importance of a team approach

• “The average 18 month old child has been exposed to 4,380 hours of oral language at a rate of 8 hours/day from birth. A child who has a communication system and receives speech/language therapy two times per week for 20-30 minutes sessions will reach this same amount of language exposure in ___ years.” (Jane Korsten)

• [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=flFNMky22-U](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=flFNMky22-U) (English)
• [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AF6X0bi3SEE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AF6X0bi3SEE) (Spanish)
Developing Capacity Through Professional Learning

- Individual training
- Consult with staff in their classroom/school site
- Coaching and modeling with using devices in the classroom
- Meeting with parents
- Providing District-wide professional learning
- Columbia Regional Trainings and…

Professional Learning in August

Before school starts in the Fall, provide a 1-day workshop

- Who: Parents (AM), Learning Specialists, GenEd Teachers, IAs, SLPs
- What:
  - AM: focusing on the Unity/Minspeak Language System with the Prentke-Romich rep
  - PM: focusing on using core language, descriptive questioning, modeling, and time for teams to lesson plan
- Why:
  - Through collaboration, we will increase opportunities for student voice in the general education classroom and
  - Increase engagement for students using AAC
Professional Learning in March- w/SLPs

- Learning Walks to focus on AAC
  - Access to the device: proximity, working order, etc
  - Vocabulary available
  - Opportunities/functions of communication: academic engagement, social, requests
  - Length/complexity of communication
  - Wait time provided
  - Response to communication
  - Modeling provided: by staff, by peers, CORE words
  - Levels of independence
  - Culture of that supports diverse communication

AAC Walkthrough Noticings
“Limiting access to language limits the potential for developing language.”

(Carole Zangari)

Key Learning across PD: Core Vocabulary

- High frequency, re-usable words representing all parts of speech
- Core words - 80% of what we say
  - these words can be used in multiple settings for multiple purposes (not just nouns)
- Fringe words - 20% of what we say
  - these words may be more specialized and context-specific.
  (Think about putting these on a manual communication board)
Core Vocabulary: Multi-meaning words

- Go
  - Make the car go
  - Go home/go outside
  - Go away!

- Turn
  - Turn on/off
  - Turn around
  - Turn the page
  - Turn up/down
  - My turn

- Up
  - Wake up
  - Open up
  - Put up

- Stop
  - Stop that!
  - Make it stop
  - I want to stop
  - It’s time to stop

Key Learning across PD: Descriptive Teaching

Students use common (core) words to demonstrate learning by describing, commenting, and/or predicting

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Referential Style</th>
<th>Descriptive Style</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Need large vocabulary of words rarely needed daily</td>
<td>Need smaller vocabulary of words used daily</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Requires least amount of thinking-rote memory</td>
<td>Requires creative thinking re: concepts and vocabulary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highest memory demand with the least pay off</td>
<td>Focus on info in the lesson, not new pages and symbols</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Example:

Referential Style (closed) | Science class- learning about states of matter
Q: Name 3 states of matter | A: solid, liquid, gas
Q: Describe something when it is a solid | A: hard, keep shape

*Gail VanTatenhove*
Core vocabulary in Communication in Everyday Situations

- Middle School
- Example: Solar System Unit
- Typical vocabulary chosen: Mercury, Venus, Earth, etc.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tell me something about Jupiter</td>
<td>Very hot; biggest one; has red spot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tell me something about Mercury</td>
<td>Close to sun; smallest one</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is the sun?</td>
<td>Big hot star</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How does an eclipse happen?</td>
<td>Moon goes in front of sun</td>
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</tbody>
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Key Learning across PD: Modeling

- Indirect teaching method that takes advantage of naturally-occurring opportunities
- Modeling target words in ways that reveal their meanings
  - Vary the number of selected icons according to the user’s ability
- AAC users need to have models 50-350 times before independent spontaneous use noted. (Gail Van Tatenhove)
Key Learning across PD: Modeling

- It takes time!
- Model one step above the current level
  - Single word
    - Going to the store say “it’s time to go to the store” and say the word “go”
  - 2-word
    - “go” and “store”
Key Learning across PD: AAC during academics

- Overview of the SETT framework (Student-Environment-Task-Tools)
- Identify an academic activity in General Education
  - a desired outcome,
  - who and where (setting),
  - target vocabulary and action plan (how to teach this skill and collect the data)
- Identify how and when to collaborate with their GenEd teacher, engage peers, and roles of staff
- Pick one area your team will focus on for increasing student voice and plan to share with group (chart paper)
Writing

First write with computer:
Picture of family with typed writing underneath the picture.

Writing with prompts:
Picture of student running with text below:
I run fast
dad fun slow
mom run fast
Writing with AAC

Writing was printed and went into the composition notebook like her peers.

Key Learning across PD: Teaming

**Cycle of Inquiry**
Focus on Student Learning, Instructional Practices, Leadership/Consulting Moves

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What is the Student Learning/Saying?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The specific words we want the student to understand, and so what settings...</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What are the Instructional Practices of the Teacher/Learning Specialist/STP?</th>
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<td>The teacher changes/structures and plans to make the student more effective...</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>What are the Leadership/Consulting moves by the Learning Specialist/STP?</th>
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<tr>
<td>The teacher creates/makes a plan that makes the teacher practice moves they use...</td>
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**Increasing Student Voice Lesson Planning**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Task Outcome/Function of Communication</th>
<th>Who/Where</th>
<th>Desired Communication &amp; Target Vocabulary</th>
<th>Tool(s)</th>
<th>Action Plan (how to teach the skill and collect that data)</th>
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Consultation Collaboration Lesson Planning
Key Learning across PD: Teaming and GenEd teacher ownership

Video of 3rd grade teacher introducing communication system to the class

6th day of 3rd grade

Key Learning across PD: Supporting students in class- generalization of skills

Video of student using device with SLP during reading
Key Learning across PD: Supporting students in class- generalization of skills

“The weeson the bus go ry and ry”

“1of those days”

Key Learning across PD: Supporting students in class- generalization of skills

3 pictures of students using their devices in their classrooms.

Device use in First and Second Grade
Key Learning across PD: Teaming and GenEd teacher partnership

Picture of student using device with peers and teacher

Picture of student using device for writing

Key Learning across PD: Teaming and GenEd teacher partnership

Video of student reading a book with his device
Key Learning across PD: Peer Partners

- Multiple videos of students using devices, across grade levels, with peers

Key Learning across PD: Home / School Connection

- Customizing for important family activities
  - Activity Page for Playing with Dog
  - Fundraising for extra-curricular group
- Sharing the core words that are being worked on
- Sharing pictures of family activities for writing
- Helping families to learn about the device
- Science fair

Picture of student using device to present at science fair
Key Learning across PD: Data Collection

Realize language
- using AAC for multiple purposes (commenting, rejecting, …)
- Are core words being generalized?

How are students using the devices for academic and social settings?
- Are we modeling

Key Learning across PD: Utilizing Common Resources

- Assistiveware
  - Blog: [https://www.assistiveware.com/blog](https://www.assistiveware.com/blog)
  - Coreword Classroom: [www.coreword.assistiveware.com](http://www.coreword.assistiveware.com)
- PracticalAAC: [https://praacticalaac.org/](https://praacticalaac.org/)
- Realize Language: [https://realizelanguage.com/](https://realizelanguage.com/)
- AAC Language lab: [https://aaclanguagelab.com/](https://aaclanguagelab.com/)
- Unique Learning System: [https://www.n2y.com/unique-learning-system/](https://www.n2y.com/unique-learning-system/)
Examples from Coreword Classroom

Core Word of the Week
LOOK

Why's (reasons to communicate) Why's (that use the target words)

Expressing Needs and Wants
Gaining attention: Look! Look there! Look here! Look at this! (Look at me!)
Requesting: I want, can I have? I want you to look, I don’t want to look, I don’t want it...

Getting and Giving Information
Simple comparing: Look, look there, look here
Express feelings: I looks like you need... It looks like he/she feels...
Discussing (comments/reactions): Look, books, story, pictures, story, download/like, look here, that’s me, look there, look not... look for...
Saying outcomes: It looks like you need... It looks like...
Give descriptions: This looks like... It looks like...
Talk about past events: I looked at... I asked... I didn’t look...
Talk about future events: I will look... I will look like...

Social Interaction
Give way to get help: It looks like... because... If you... it will look...

Future Learning- Next Steps

- Debrief the AAC Learning walks with our SLPs and determine next steps
- Opportunities for families to come and experience ways to model and use AAC in activities
- Continue to build capacity amongst all staff for increasing engagement in academic and social opportunities
Thank you…..

- **Key Take Aways:**
  - The Power of a Team
  - Use of Core Words
  - Descriptive Teaching
  - Modeling
  - It takes time

Any Questions?