
Professional Certificate in Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) Assessment for Special Needs Learners

Types of AAC Systems

AAC Systems: Augmentative and Alternative Communication systems are tools and strategies used to support individuals with communication difficulties. These systems can range from low-tech options like communication boards to high-tech devices like speech-generating devices (SGDs).

Communication Boards: Communication boards are low-tech AAC systems that consist of a grid of symbols, pictures, or words that individuals can point to in order to communicate. They are often used by individuals who have limited verbal abilities or who are nonverbal.

Speech-generating Devices (SGDs): SGDs are high-tech AAC systems that use synthesized or recorded speech output to help individuals communicate. These devices often have a touchscreen interface with symbols or pictures that users can select to form messages.

Vocabulary Selection Techniques: Vocabulary selection techniques are strategies used to determine the words or symbols that should be included in an individual's AAC system. These techniques can involve assessing the individual's language skills, preferences, and communication needs.

Symbol Sets: Symbol sets refer to the different types of symbols that can be used in AAC systems. Common symbol sets include Picture Communication Symbols (PCS), Blissymbols, and SymbolStix.

Visual Scene Displays (VSDs): VSDs are a type of AAC system that uses photographs or drawings of real-life scenes to support communication. Users can select different elements within the scene to create messages.

Core Vocabulary: Core vocabulary refers to a set of high-frequency words that are essential for communication in various contexts. These words are often included in AAC systems to support efficient and effective communication.

Fringer Spelling System: The Fringer Spelling System is a method of text-based communication for individuals who have limited motor control. It uses a small number of keys arranged in a circular layout to spell out words.

Direct Selection: Direct selection is a method of accessing symbols or words in an AAC system by physically touching them. This can be done using a touchscreen, communication board, or other input method.

Scanning: Scanning is a method of accessing symbols or words in an AAC system by highlighting or cycling through options until the desired item is selected. Scanning can be done visually, auditorily, or through switches.

Head Pointing: Head pointing is a method of accessing symbols or words in an AAC system by using head movements to indicate selections. This can be done with the help of a camera or other tracking device.

Eye Gaze: Eye gaze is a method of accessing symbols or words in an AAC system by using eye movements to indicate selections. This can be done with the help of eye-tracking technology.

Switch Access: Switch access is a method of controlling an AAC system using external switches or buttons. Users can activate the switches with their hands, feet, head, or other body parts to make selections.

Single-switch scanning: Single-switch scanning is a method of accessing symbols or words in an AAC system using a single switch. The system highlights or cycles through options, and the user activates the switch when the desired item is selected.

Multiple-switch scanning: Multiple-switch scanning is a method of accessing symbols or words in an AAC system using multiple switches. Each switch corresponds to a different direction or action, allowing the user to navigate through options.

Visual Prompting: Visual prompting is a strategy used to support individuals in using their AAC system by providing visual cues or reminders. This can help users remember where symbols are located or how to navigate the system.

Modeling: Modeling is a strategy used to teach individuals how to use their AAC system by demonstrating its use. Communication partners can model selecting symbols, forming messages, and engaging in conversation to support the user's learning.

Partner-Assisted Scanning: Partner-assisted scanning is a method of accessing symbols or words in an AAC system with the help of a communication partner. The partner presents options and observes the user's responses to make selections.

Dynamic Display: Dynamic display is a feature of some AAC systems that allows symbols or words to change based on the context or user input. This can help users access a larger vocabulary and navigate through different communication pages.

Static Display: Static display is a feature of some AAC systems that presents a fixed set of symbols or words on the screen. Users can select items from the display to form messages without the symbols changing.

Motor Planning: Motor planning refers to the ability to coordinate and execute movements to interact with an AAC system. Users must plan and execute precise movements to select symbols, form messages, and navigate through the system.

Symbol Size: Symbol size refers to the physical dimensions of symbols in an AAC system. Symbols can vary in size to accommodate different visual needs and motor abilities of users.

Symbol Color: Symbol color refers to the hue, saturation, and brightness of symbols in an AAC system. Using different colors can help users distinguish between categories of symbols or emphasize important information.

Symbol Layout: Symbol layout refers to the organization and arrangement of symbols in an AAC system. Layouts can be grid-based, linear, hierarchical, or customized to meet the needs and preferences of users.

Symbol Density: Symbol density refers to the spacing and distribution of symbols in an AAC system. High-density layouts contain more symbols per page, while low-density layouts have fewer symbols to reduce visual clutter.

Symbol Transparency: Symbol transparency refers to the degree to which symbols in an AAC system allow background elements to show through. Adjusting transparency can help users focus on selected symbols while maintaining context.

Symbol Animation: Symbol animation is a feature of some AAC systems that adds movement or visual effects to symbols. Animation can capture users' attention, provide feedback, or enhance engagement with the system.

Symbol Labeling: Symbol labeling is the practice of adding text or labels to symbols in an AAC system. Labels can provide additional information, clarify meanings, and support literacy development for users.

Symbol Editing: Symbol editing is the process of customizing symbols in an AAC system to meet the specific needs and preferences of users. This can involve modifying existing symbols, creating new symbols, or importing external symbols.

Symbol Importing: Symbol importing is the process of adding external symbols or images to an AAC system. Users can import pictures, photographs, or symbols from online libraries or personal collections to personalize their communication.

Symbol Categorization: Symbol categorization is the practice of organizing symbols in an AAC system into groups based on their function, theme, or relationship. Categories help users locate symbols quickly and understand their meaning.

Symbol Search: Symbol search is a feature of some AAC systems that allows users to find specific symbols by typing keywords or descriptions. This can help users access symbols that are not readily available on the current page.

Symbol Prediction: Symbol prediction is a feature of some AAC systems that suggests words or symbols based on user input. Predictions can speed up communication, reduce typing effort, and support language generation.

Symbol Pronunciation: Symbol pronunciation refers to the auditory representation of symbols in an AAC system. Users can listen to spoken words or phrases to support comprehension, pronunciation, and language learning.

Symbol Feedback: Symbol feedback is the visual or auditory response provided by an AAC system when a symbol is selected. Feedback confirms the user's selection, highlights the chosen symbol, and reinforces successful communication.

Symbol Storage: Symbol storage is the capacity of an AAC system to store and organize a library of symbols. Users can access stored symbols, create custom symbol sets, and manage their communication resources

efficiently.

Symbol Sharing: Symbol sharing is the practice of exchanging symbols or communication resources between users of AAC systems. Sharing can facilitate collaboration, support social interaction, and expand access to diverse symbol sets.

Symbol Backup: Symbol backup is the process of saving and securing symbol libraries in an AAC system. Backups protect users' communication resources from loss, damage, or technical issues, ensuring continuity of communication.

Symbol Update: Symbol update is the practice of refreshing symbol libraries in an AAC system with new or revised symbols. Updates can introduce vocabulary enhancements, address user feedback, and improve the overall user experience.

Symbol Assessment: Symbol assessment is the process of evaluating the appropriateness, effectiveness, and usability of symbols in an AAC system. Assessments help identify user needs, preferences, and challenges to optimize symbol selection.

Symbol Customization: Symbol customization is the practice of tailoring symbols in an AAC system to match the individual characteristics and communication goals of users. Customizations can include size, color, layout, and content modifications.

Symbol Maintenance: Symbol maintenance is the ongoing management and upkeep of symbols in an AAC system. Maintenance tasks may include adding new symbols, updating existing symbols, organizing symbol libraries, and ensuring system functionality.

Symbol Evaluation: Symbol evaluation is the systematic appraisal of symbols in an AAC system to assess their quality, relevance, and impact on user communication. Evaluations measure symbol effectiveness, user satisfaction, and system performance.

Symbol Selection: Symbol selection is the process of choosing symbols for inclusion in an AAC system based on user needs, preferences, and communication goals. Selecting appropriate symbols is essential for supporting effective and efficient communication.

Symbol Integration: Symbol integration is the incorporation of symbols into an individual's communication routines, strategies, and interactions. Integrating symbols seamlessly into daily activities enhances user engagement, comprehension, and participation.

Symbol Training: Symbol training is the instruction and practice provided to users to develop their skills in using symbols within an AAC system. Training programs focus on symbol navigation, selection, message formation, and communication strategies.

Symbol Implementation: Symbol implementation is the deployment and use of symbols in an AAC system to support individuals' communication needs. Implementing symbols effectively involves setting up the system, training users, and monitoring progress.

Symbol Transition: Symbol transition is the process of shifting from one set of symbols to another in an AAC system. Transitions may occur when users outgrow their current symbols, require more advanced vocabulary, or need symbols that better reflect their identity.

Symbol Adaptation: Symbol adaptation is the modification of symbols in an AAC system to accommodate changes in user preferences, abilities, or communication goals. Adaptations can involve resizing symbols, changing colors, or updating content to better meet user needs.

Symbol Replacement: Symbol replacement is the substitution of existing symbols with new symbols in an AAC system. Replacing symbols may be necessary to address outdated content, improve symbol clarity, or enhance user engagement and comprehension.

Symbol Expansion: Symbol expansion is the addition of new symbols to an AAC system to broaden the vocabulary and communication options available to users. Expanding symbols can support language development, promote expression, and enhance user autonomy.

Symbol Repair: Symbol repair is the process of fixing or replacing damaged, missing, or malfunctioning symbols in an AAC system. Maintaining symbol integrity ensures that users can communicate effectively and access their desired symbols.

Symbol Upgrading: Symbol upgrading is the enhancement of symbols in an AAC system to improve their quality, relevance, or usability. Upgrades may involve redesigning symbols, adding features, or incorporating user feedback to optimize symbol performance.

Symbol Accessibility: Symbol accessibility refers to the ease with which users can perceive, locate, and interact with symbols in an AAC system. Accessible symbols are designed to be user-friendly, intuitive, and responsive to diverse user needs.

Symbol Usability: Symbol usability is the extent to which symbols in an AAC system are effective, efficient, and satisfying for users to navigate and communicate with. Usable symbols enhance user experience, engagement, and communication outcomes.

Symbol Legibility: Symbol legibility is the clarity and readability of symbols in an AAC system. Legible symbols are easy to recognize, interpret, and select, supporting user comprehension, speed, and accuracy in communication.

Symbol Consistency: Symbol consistency is the uniformity and predictability of symbols in an AAC system. Consistent symbols follow established conventions, maintain visual coherence, and facilitate user recognition and learning.

Symbol Integration: Symbol integration is the seamless blending of symbols into an individual's communication environment, routines, and interactions. Integrated symbols support user engagement, comprehension, and participation in various contexts.

Symbol Personalization: Symbol personalization is the customization of symbols in an AAC system to reflect

the individual preferences, interests, and identity of users. Personalized symbols enhance user engagement, motivation, and self-expression in communication.

Symbol Relevance: Symbol relevance is the appropriateness and significance of symbols in an AAC system to the user's communication needs, interests, and context. Relevant symbols are meaningful, engaging, and supportive of user expression and comprehension.

Symbol Engagement: Symbol engagement is the level of user involvement, interest, and motivation in interacting with symbols in an AAC system. Engaged users are more likely to communicate effectively, persist in using the system, and achieve positive outcomes.

Symbol Comprehension: Symbol comprehension is the ability of users to understand and interpret symbols in an AAC system accurately. Comprehension skills enable users to select symbols, form messages, and engage in meaningful communication with others.

Symbol Production: Symbol production is the process of generating messages using symbols in an AAC system. Production skills involve selecting symbols, arranging them into meaningful sequences, and conveying intended messages to communication partners.

Symbol Fluency: Symbol fluency is the speed, accuracy, and ease with which users can navigate and communicate with symbols in an AAC system. Fluent users can access symbols quickly, form messages efficiently, and engage in dynamic conversations.

Symbol Maintenance: Symbol maintenance is the ongoing upkeep, management, and optimization of symbols in an AAC system. Maintenance tasks include adding new symbols, updating existing symbols, organizing symbol libraries, and ensuring system functionality.

Symbol Evaluation: Symbol evaluation is the systematic assessment of symbols in an AAC system to determine their effectiveness, usability, and impact on user communication. Evaluations help identify strengths, weaknesses, and areas for improvement in symbol design and implementation.

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