



PATHWAYS HEALTH CENTRE FOR CHILDREN

Augmentative Communication Services - Training Session #1

Core Words

- Words that we use to make up most of what we say (*high frequency words*).
- They are a small set of words, but unchanging in language.
- Core words are *universal* and *consistent* across environment, age /gender, topics and activities.
- Examples of core words are; I, you, want, need, help, see, fast, slow, big, and little. Instead, core vocabulary lists usually contain words other than nouns.
- They consist of verbs, pronouns, adjectives and adverbs, demonstratives (i.e. this, that).
- Historically, vocabulary selection for most Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) tools consisted mostly of nouns, with the addition of a few verbs (“I want”, “I see”, “eat”).
- These were chosen because of their ease of representation, and they were the easiest to teach, but they were not very general.

GENERAL CORE - high frequency words which apply to everybody.

PERSONAL CORE - high frequency words which are important to the individual, such as family names.

FRINGE VOCABULARY - the words necessary for a particular individual in a particular circumstance (i.e. a red crayon during art class).

Why Use Core Words?

- With only few key words, much can be said to convey many thoughts.
- Core words help to generate novel utterances (i.e. “I want help”, “I like that”, “I want more”).

Pragmatic Organization Dynamic Display (PODD)

PRAGMATICS - how we use the language we have, language during interaction.

ORGANIZATION - the PODD is organized for communicative flow. As you move farther into the book, core words and vocabulary associated with the subject messages are organized together on the page.

DYNAMIC DISPLAY - the communication book changes as you work through the message, similar to a dynamic display on a device which opens to a folder of additional message components.



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The Development of the PODD

The PODD was developed by Gayle Porter a Speech-Language Pathologist, using strategies for developing autonomous communication based on the following:

- Literature and AAC learning strategies (i.e. Aided Language Stimulation*)
- Normal language development
- Second language learning

**Aided language occurs when the facilitator points out key symbols in the child's communication display in conjunction with all ongoing verbal language stimulation being directed toward the child. (It's All About the Interaction, by J. Goetz and L. Chambers).*

Partner Powered

- The PODD contains links, tabs, and pages enabling flow through the conversation.
- It is partner-powered in that the partner turns the page (where appropriate), not the child (the child will turn the pages later).
- It is child-directed, which means that the messages are driven by the child, and validates their communication.
- The PODD leads the partner to go where the child's communication takes them.
- It is not dependent on adult-driven choices presented.
- We want the users to learn the patterns of the PODD, so, the partner should use the PODD to talk to their child.

Frequently Asked Questions

**The term "communication system" refers to any AAC tool prescribed to support expressive functional communication.*

Q: Will my child use their device?

A: Children will use their system if they see it as their voice. Experience has shown that a client will not use their system if it is seen as "work". For example, if it's used in therapy sessions or specific activities, and then put away, it will be seen as a "task". Using the communication system, whether it is the PODD, Proloquo2Go, or another language system, should not be the target or goal we do (in a group or a session). It is the voice we use while doing the work.

Q: How do I know if my child meant to say the message chosen?

A: Assume competence. The underlying concept in the communication system is that we are assuming the child is a competent communicator, and is intending to communicate the message he/she accesses. If it turns out to be incorrect, the child will learn to correct.



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Frequently Asked Questions Continued...

Q: There are too many symbols.

A: Yes, there are a lot of symbols, but our spoken language also has lots of symbols; they are auditory. We learn the symbols because there is a pattern to them. If you think of it as a language, it is not too many. It is organized and systematic (it is not a collection of labels of activities/toys). People will learn to use the symbol system if it is presented the way language is presented.

Q: How fast will my child learn this system?

A: The user will learn the language system faster when it is used consistently and frequently through **modeling**. When modeling the device touch/point to the message buttons, emphasizing key words, and speaking the small grammatical words.

Using the communication system when speaking to the child, shows them how the system is used in natural contexts. This parallels normal language acquisition and AAC learning. We speak to a person using the language we expect them to learn and then use.

Don't be too hard on yourself as you are learning this new language. As you correct your mistakes, your child will learn how to correct their mistakes and you will expose your child to more vocabulary. Most importantly, there is no wrong path. We can say the same message in different ways (using different word combinations).

Q: "We understand everything he/she says."

A: This may be true, but, others may not understand your child. Also, your child may have wanted to communicate something you could not have guessed.

Q: How do I get others on board?

A: Talk to your home support workers, family and any school staff working with your child. In schools, one of the strongest ways to do this is through the IEP.