Communication Partner Profile (CPP v1) - *AAC-Oriented Self-Reflection*

This profile should take less than 15 minutes to complete. It is a tool for self-reflection and to help find opportunities for improvement in supporting people who use AAC (AAC users). If you find yourself thinking "that doesn't apply to me", please reconsider – AAC users benefit most when their entire circle of support helps them learn to communicate.

This form is not meant as a metric to compare the performance between multiple communication partners. So no need to feel disappointed if you're answering "never" in many areas -- don't worry! Very few of us manage to do all of this all of the time. Just pick a few spots for improvement; don't try to do everything at once. It's also worth thinking of communicator profiling forms you may have seen, and how lists of "never" responses affect attitudes towards AAC users and their access to robust systems.

For each row, circle the option that best matches your experience. This form can be filled out once or on a regular basis, as a tool to help you think about areas where you are doing well or could improve, in supporting, teaching, modeling for, and acting as a communication partner for one or more AAC users.

The phrase "communication suite", as used in this form, refers to the full range of communication strategies used by the AAC user. That may include high-tech or paper-based products, but may also include speech or non-verbal actions. Please remember that all of us use multiple modes of communication regularly, and honoring communication in whatever form someone is using helps build the trust, understanding, and motivation needed to continue developing communication skills.

The phrase "communication partner", as used in this form, refers to any person who is interacting with or responding to the AAC user, regardless of whether they have received any formal training.

My Name: _____

Date of Self-Reflection: _____

List of all AAC Users I'm thinking about (respecting privacy):

_____

When I am interacting with an AAC user, I make sure that:

I speak naturally and directly to the AAC user, regardless of how or whether they respond.	Never	Occasionally	Usually	Consistently
I respect AAC user autonomy, and ensure I've been given permission before touching their device, providing physical support, or crowding them.	Never	Occasionally	Usually	Consistently
I respond to all communication attempts, regardless of whether they were on the "desired" device or style (gestures, sounds, etc.).	Never	Occasionally	Usually	Consistently
I accept that "no response", or rejection, is a valid way for AAC users to express themselves.	Never	Occasionally	Usually	Consistently
I give AAC users my full attention & don't interrupt, or I wait for them to signal completion before I respond.	Never	Occasionally	Usually	Consistently
I have spent time getting to know AAC users so I can better personalize my interactions to their experience.	Never	Occasionally	Usually	Consistently
I include AAC users in meaningful decision-making that will affect them in the short term (meals or activities, clothing choice, daily schedule, etc.).	Never	Occasionally	Usually	Consistently
I include AAC users in meaningful decision-making that will affect them in the long term (device layout, medical decisions, topics for study, etc.)	Never	Occasionally	Usually	Consistently
I am familiar enough with their vocabulary layout to be able to effectively show AAC users how to select different options using their communication suite.	Never	Occasionally	Usually	Consistently
I show (or model, on a separate device if possible) examples of words or phrases beyond what the AAC user has already mastered.	Never	Occasionally	Usually	Consistently
I look for natural communication opportunities instead of expecting a specific "correct" response or withholding activities/items to force communication.	Never	Occasionally	Usually	Consistently

As I observe or coach others interacting with AAC user(s), I ensure that:

AAC users receive proper explanations about things that are happening to and around them, and are given opportunities to decide about or to direct those experiences.	I forget about that	I notice a problem but don't say anything	Sometimes	Usually	Consistently
AAC users have access to their personalized communication suite at all times.	I forget about that	I notice a problem but don't say anything	Sometimes	Usually	Consistently
AAC users are asked for permission before others touch their device or adjust settings.	I forget about that	I notice a problem but don't say anything	Sometimes	Usually	Consistently
AAC user's preference in partner's role (where to stand, whether to wait for completion, etc.) is known and respected.	I forget about that	I notice a problem but don't say anything	Sometimes	Usually	Consistently
Communication partners respond to all attempts, regardless of whether they were on the "desired" device or style (not "if you want that then use your talker to say it").	I forget about that	I notice a problem but don't say anything	Sometimes	Usually	Consistently
Communication happens naturally, and is not just question-answer sessions or asking for clarification after each comment.	I forget about that	I notice a problem but don't say anything	Sometimes	Usually	Consistently
AAC users are shown examples (on a separate device where possible) of how to express their thoughts and ideas using their communication suite or a similar system.	I forget about that	I notice a problem but don't say anything	Sometimes	Usually	Consistently
Physical control (i.e. hand-over-hand) is avoided for selection, unless the AAC user's express permission is given each time	I forget about that	I notice a problem but don't say anything	Sometimes	Usually	Consistently
Empowering rather than dismissive language is used about and around the AAC user (not "you can ignore her", "he's just babbling", "that didn't mean anything").	I forget about that	I notice a problem but don't say anything	Sometimes	Usually	Consistently

As I collaborate with other members of the support team, I ensure that:

All attempts to use the AAC system are responded to as meaningful communication, including looking at a device, babbling (selecting symbols without clear intent), or using an unexpected symbol.	Never	Sometimes	Usually	Consistently
Communication partners wait sufficient time (5-10 seconds or customized to the AAC user) after and between questions or communication invitations.	Never	Sometimes	Usually	Consistently
Team members are familiar with the AAC user and their AAC system and have specific examples of concepts they can model for the AAC user.	Never	Sometimes	Usually	Consistently
Literacy exposure/learning happens in all settings and at the same time as other communication aspects (not "communication first, literacy later")	Never	Sometimes	Usually	Consistently
The AAC user's external environment is set up to foster diverse and interesting communication opportunities.	Never	Sometimes	Usually	Consistently
All team members understand their opportunity to teach or encourage communication in every environment and context.	Never	Sometimes	Usually	Consistently
All team members are given opportunities to review and practice strategies before implementing them in-person.	Never	Sometimes	Usually	Consistently
AAC users are included in decisions about their therapy, development, and learning activities.	Never	Sometimes	Usually	Consistently
The goal-setting process includes participation and approval by the AAC user (and their family if desired by the AAC user).	Never	Sometimes	Usually	Consistently
All team members are aware of goals that have been set with the AAC user, and are updated on progress being made toward those goals.	Never	Sometimes	Usually	Consistently

I pay attention for:

New words or phrases the AAC user is starting to use, so I can find opportunities to model other examples with the word or phrase.	Never	Occasionally	Usually	Consistently
Communication attempts that others may have missed, and I point them out so everyone can learn to support each unique AAC user.	Never	Occasionally	Usually	Consistently
Instances when people talk about the AAC user to caregivers or staff, so I can help them learn to speak directly with the AAC user.	Never	Occasionally	Usually	Consistently
Times when AAC user voices aren't given equal weight or aren't being included in decisions that affect their lives.	Never	Occasionally	Usually	Consistently
Opportunities to introduce literacy (both reading and writing) learning to AAC users who have not yet shown mastery.	Never	Occasionally	Usually	Consistently
New communication partners, and I share with those partners simple concepts that can help them be a more effective partner (honoring attempts, wait time, eye contact, etc.).	Never	Occasionally	Usually	Consistently
Positive experiences I can point out to AAC users to help them identify their own communication growth.	Never	Occasionally	Usually	Consistently
Success stories that I can share with others to help keep everyone engaged in AAC users' progress.	Never	Occasionally	Usually	Consistently
Other AAC users that may be a good network or mentor for the AAC users that I work with.				

In the following settings, I look for opportunities to encourage (but not force) communication attempts for the AAC user(s):

(Please mark "not applicable" for contexts where you do not interact with the AAC users)

Learning Settings	Currently Proficient	Not Applicable	Never	Occasionally	Usually	Consistently
Shared Reading	Currently Proficient	Not Applicable	Never	Occasionally	Usually	Consistently
Playing Games	Currently Proficient	Not Applicable	Never	Occasionally	Usually	Consistently
Meal Time	Currently Proficient	Not Applicable	Never	Occasionally	Usually	Consistently
Outdoors/Playground	Currently Proficient	Not Applicable	Never	Occasionally	Usually	Consistently
Leisure/Relaxing/ Break Time	Currently Proficient	Not Applicable	Never	Occasionally	Usually	Consistently
Entertainment	Currently Proficient	Not Applicable	Never	Occasionally	Usually	Consistently
Social Settings	Currently Proficient	Not Applicable	Never	Occasionally	Usually	Consistently
Places of Worship	Currently Proficient	Not Applicable	Never	Occasionally	Usually	Consistently
Travel/Transit	Currently Proficient	Not Applicable	Never	Occasionally	Usually	Consistently
Restaurants/Shopping	Currently Proficient	Not Applicable	Never	Occasionally	Usually	Consistently
Arrivals/Departures	Currently Proficient	Not Applicable	Never	Occasionally	Usually	Consistently
Other:	Currently Proficient	Not Applicable	Never	Occasionally	Usually	Consistently
Other:	Currently Proficient	Not Applicable	Never	Occasionally	Usually	Consistently

I discuss with the whole team -- including the AAC user -- goals related to the following aspects of communication:

Linguistic – understanding what words mean, and how to organize and use them	Never	Occasionally	Usually	Consistently
Literacy (Reading) – shared reading, learning to read, comprehend and analyze written text	Never	Occasionally	Usually	Consistently
Literacy (Writing) – learning word sounds, rules of spelling, creative and formal writing, organizing a statement	Never	Occasionally	Usually	Consistently
Operational – how to navigate the device, switch between apps or pages, use the keyboard or autocomplete, control volume, charge the device, managing switches or other hardware	Never	Occasionally	Usually	Consistently
Social – following social cues and effectively participating in real-time conversations, staying on topic, keeping listener's attention, developing relationships through communication, what is appropriate to talk about when	Never	Occasionally	Usually	Consistently
Strategic – working around limited available vocabulary, requesting new vocabulary, correcting misunderstandings, getting time to craft a response	Never	Occasionally	Usually	Consistently
Emotional – self-advocacy and resilience, recognition and regulation of emotions, talking through feelings, confidence in communication, learning from mistakes	Never	Occasionally	Usually	Consistently
Mentoring – beneficial communication partners, identifying AAC users who would be good mentors, empowering AAC users to develop their own network	Never	Occasionally	Usually	Consistently

Notes or observations you would like to remember as part of this profile:

Goals you would like to set for yourself after filling out this profile:

Conclusion

Well done! Now that you've finished this self-reflection form, please go back through and look for any areas you'd like to focus on for improvement. Take a minute to think about any questions that surprised you. If you feel discouraged or overwhelmed, please accept our apologies, that was never the goal! Try to focus on one or two things you could improve upon and try to think about this as a learning experience and not a guilt trip. Write down any goals for yourself in the notes section, try to be specific. Consider setting a reminder on your calendar to fill out this reflection again in 3-9 months.

Below are some links to additional resources that may be helpful in thinking of goals to set, strategies to learn, etc.

[Instructional videos on getting started with AAC](#)

[Literacy Instruction for Students with Significant Disabilities](#)

[How to Write AAC Goals - with goal bank](#)

[15 Great AAC Goals for the New Year](#)

[3 strategies to support choice and control for AAC users](#)

[Assessing AAC Skills and Competencies to Inform Intervention & Show Progress](#)

[Getting started with AAC](#)

[Choosing Empowering Language: Words that invite AAC users to grow & be heard](#)

References:

Jennifer Kent-Walsh & David Mcnaughton (2005) Communication Partner Instruction in AAC: Present Practices and Future Directions 21:3, 195-204, DOI: 10.1080/07434610400006646

Janice Light & David McNaughton (2014) Communicative Competence for Individuals who require AAC, Augmentative and Alternative Communication, 30:1, 1-18, DOI: 10.3109/07434618.2014.885080

Janice Light & David McNaughton - Shared Reading :: Literacy Instruction

AssistiveWare - How to be a respectful communication partner, Just Ask: What we can learn from AAC users

Romski, M. A. & Sevcik, R. A. (1996). Breaking the speech barrier: Language development through augmented means. Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes.

Pindiprolu, S. S. (2012). A review of naturalistic interventions with young children with autism. The Journal of International Special Education, 12(1), 69-78.

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Barker, R.M., Akaba, S., Brady, N.C.,& Thieman-Bourque, K. (2013) Support for AAC use in preschool, and growth in language in young children with developmental disabilities. Augmentative and Alternative Communication, 29(4), 334-346.

Dorney, K. E., & Erickson, K. (2019) Transactions Within a Classroom-Based AAC Intervention Targeting Preschool Students with Autism Spectrum Disorders. Exceptionality Education International, 29, 42-58.

http://www.elament.org.uk/media/1207/10_essential_shared_capabilities__2011_version_.pdf

https://www.aacscotland.org.uk/files/cm/files/ipaacks.pdf

Erickson, K., Koppenhaver, D. Musselwhite, C. - Literacy Instruction for Students with Significant Disabilities

Special Thanks To:

Categories:

A - Autonomy - "I'll decide" (12)
Empowerment (12), Communicator Choice (8), Personalization/Planning (5), Mutli-Modal Communication (4)

B - Skills - "I am able" (16)
Modeling aa(5), Literacy (5), Communication Everywhere (14), Expanding Vocabulary (4)

C - Resilience - "I am enough" (9)
Individual Respect (9), Social (4)

D - Advocacy - "I belong" (9)
Train Others (7), Mentoring (2)