

REAP what you SOW - a child's communication development is like a healthy garden.

R - Recognize existing skills and abilities - [The land](#)

- Assess
- Get a baseline
- How can you leverage existing skills and abilities to program for growth?
- Put your feet in the mud! Jump in and get dirty! Your child is going to learn AAC through immersion. This starts with you modeling and using aided language stimulation (ALgS) with them in the land they live in, day in and day out. Model in natural, everyday situations.
- Are they most confident, happy and successful when operating within their abilities?

E - Engage with likes and interests - [The Climate](#)

- What lights up the child?
- Notice when they are the most engaged across all settings, people, and during what activities. There may be engagement hiding in interesting places for example looking out the window while driving.
- What does the student gravitate towards? - and how can their interests be leveraged for communication growth?

A - Activate the power of visual supports - [The interaction between land and climate](#)

- Assess the environment - is it rich in visual supports.
- Does the student already use visual supports to communicate? Are you utilizing the power of video modeling?
- Are the communication partners modeling communication? Are they modeling core words? What is the culture/knowledge around communication - be honest here!
- Accept any attempts at communication. Attribute meaning for new communicators, "I saw you looking/reaching for ___." Were you saying, "I like that?" Support the child's intent.
- How can the environment be enriched with visual supports? What is needed? How easily and quickly can the culture around communication be enhanced?
- Do they have access to light-tech/no-tech communication as well as high-tech?
- Are there any imbalances? Too much or too little of anything?

P - Playfully foster communication - [The ecosystem](#)

- Play is everything!
- We learn and remember when we have fun. Don't be afraid to be silly!
- Laughing fuels growth and provides a safe place to problem solve, make mistakes and build resilience.
- Play brings structure and supports positive behavioural outcomes.
- Play builds relationships and opens infinite opportunities to practice and learn new skills.
- Using aided language stimulation (ALgS)/modeling in play builds neurological ties in the brain to the activities and language. These patterns are learned through experience, not isolated drills.

S - Systems - set up, implement, review and adjust. - [The Gardener](#)

- Do you have a system for implementation? Plants need routine maintenance, watering, and food. Are you providing a consistent, reliable routine/system that will nourish and foster growth? Do you know the motor plan or are you only expecting the child to know how to access the device?
- The systems for implementation are dynamic and will change from week to week or year to year, depending on the growth of communication and the shifts in culture/knowledge around communication. Our interests change. Theirs may too!
- Systems need to be designed, implemented, reviewed and adjusted.
- Systems should begin with scaffolding from what they know, understand and enjoy.
- Does your system foster SNUG: Spontaneous Novel Utterance Generation? Can the child say what they want to say, when they want to say it, and how they want to say it?
- Is your system teaching compliance or relationship? Relationships involve connection, interaction, and understanding.
- Systems should include collaboration with all communication partners, educational and therapy support teams.
- Does the child's system provide access to robust communication? Do they have core words, fringe vocabulary, a keyboard and the ability to store longer phrases?

O - Our growth as communication partners - [The sun](#)

- As parents, teachers, carers, and therapists - we are all learning about the child and about ourselves. We are all learning together.
- The path we travel will be determined by the openness of the team and the growth of the child.
- Setting everyone up for opportunities to succeed will welcome growth.
- Belief is the most powerful tool we have! There are no prerequisites.
- Exposure: Users of AAC need routine and meaningful exposure to AAC through ALgS in order to build their receptive and expressive language.

W - Winning and success into young adulthood - [The Edges](#)

- In nature and life - it is at the edge where the most happens - when the rainforest meets the sea - two ecosystems blend and play.
- When a child takes their first steps - their “crawling world” is now interacting with their more complex “walking world.”
- Engage their brain, get them actively involved as a participant, leader and mentor to other users of AAC. Let them begin pollinating the land around them. Give them opportunities to be in charge and lead/facilitate. Lead them to independence. This is where winning starts!
- When a child becomes a young adult - their learnings and confidence, their sense of self and skills will now overlap into adulthood. How will this go for them? Are they positioned to win? Are we teaching them to ASK questions, protest, comment, spell and read?
- Are they being taught literacy skills from an early age (e.g., print awareness, decoding, shared reading, letter boards, etc.)? Can they read, write, read and CREATE books? If not, how can we teach this or adapt the environment for access?
- We are preparing for this moment and keeping it front of mind during childhood development. The edge is both an end and a beginning.
- When we are considerate of all the factors - we are ensuring children will grow into young adults with resilience, confidence, self-esteem and have a healthy relationship with mistakes and comfort zones. Being an effective communicator leads to positive life outcomes associated with physical health, mental health, relationships, emotional regulation, and capacity to meaningfully contribute to society.
- Are we fostering communication circles, friendships, vocational transitions?

Let's tend these gardens together.

Let's work with the prevailing conditions.

Let's be resourceful, efficient and effective.

Let's learn and grow together for a better future!

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