Slide 1

AAC Process

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Slide 2

What is the Process?

3 areas to consider

1. Method to Represent Symbols
2. Method to Select Symbols
3. Method to Transmit the Message
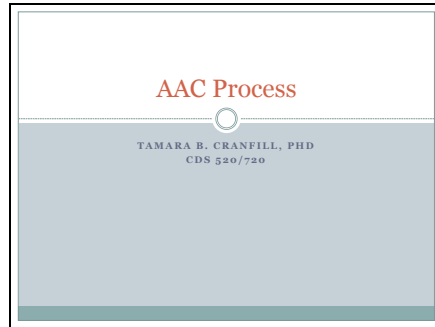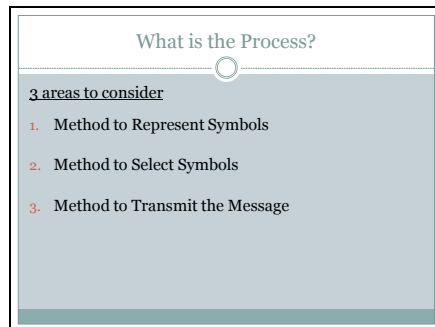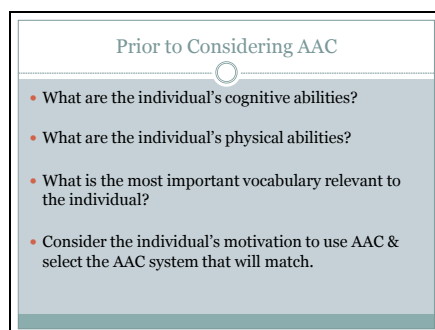
Now we begin to think about the process required to determine an appropriate augmentative/alternative systems. According to Kangas & Lloyd (1998), there are three areas for consideration in the AAC process. (Read slide) Representation may include objects, words, drawings, symbols, photographs, line drawings – the list goes on. Selection refers to how the communicators choose the representation such as pointing directly or using a scanning device like a head pointer. How the message is transmitted relates to visual or auditory output.

Slide 3

Prior to Considering AAC

- What are the individual's cognitive abilities?
- What are the individual's physical abilities?
- What is the most important vocabulary relevant to the individual?
- Consider the individual's motivation to use AAC & select the AAC system that will match.

Generally, these are questions to ask prior to considering AAC use. We will be discussing these issues in more detail as the course progresses. Consider this an overview (& quick reference!) of what to consider.

Slide 4

Prior to Considering AAC

- Always enlist expert help (Go Team!)
  - Speech-language pathologists
  - Occupational therapists
  - Computer specialists
  - Educators
  - AAC Associations & Organizations

Slide 5

Communication Competence

- Linguistic
  - Receptive & expressive language skills
- Operational
  - Technical skills to operate system
- Social
  - Communication interactions
- Strategic
  - Compensatory strategies for functional limitations

Four components of communicative competence to consider. This is applied to the individual with the communication disorder and possibly, individuals important within the individual's circle of communication. 1. Linguistic competence = What are the receptive & expressive language skills of the individual? How well does she understand language? How well does she use language to indicate wants/needs? It is important to consider not only skills with regard to verbal language, but the linguistic code ("rules") associated with the AAC system. How well can the individual follow the rules of the pictures or symbols AND how well can the communication partner understand the system? For example, one picture might be used for multiple meanings…a bed may just mean "I'm tired." or it could be more specific, "I'm ready for bed." 2. Operational competence refers to steps involved with operating & maintaining the AAC system. It is not unusual for these tasks to be completed by someone other than the person with the communication disorder like parents, spouses,

educators, siblings, & caretakers. These individuals not only need to be available to complete the operation & maintenance, but also available for instruction & training (typically ongoing). They may also be responsible for adaptations needed as the system expands. 3. Social competence = refers to the pragmatic components of language. The user will be more successful if she is sensitive to the nuances of communication such as when to speak, when not to, what to talk about to whom, when & where. One might presume that AAC users have these skills, but the reverse is often the case because they have not been afforded the trial & error opportunities the verbal world receives. Very important to include this in your assessment & intervention processes. 4. Strategic competence = regardless of how "perfect" the AAC system is for the individual, there are always limitations. (There are limitations with verbal communication as well!) Users must be taught methods for adapting when the system "breaks down"…for example, how would the individual handle a partner who jumps in prior to the completion of the message if typing or scanning is slow? In some cases, guessing or completions by the listener may be the adaptation, but in other settings it may insulting or inappropriate behavior. Again, training is necessary for both the AAC user & communication partners.

Slide 6

Basic Terminology

- Symbol types = graphic, auditory, gestural, & tactile or textured
- Aid = device, either electronic or non-electronic, used to transmit or receive messages
- Techniques = ways message transmitted
- Strategies = ways of transmitting most effectively & efficiently

Slide 7

Purposes of Interactions

4 purposes of communicative intent

1. Communicate wants/needs
2. Information transfer
3. Social closeness / intimacy
4. Social etiquette (group or individual)
5. Self-talk

Communication of any type has a purpose. Purpose is determined by the sender of the message, but the receiver must also interpret or recognize its purpose. Sometimes this is easier said than done. For example, when a man asks a woman what is wrong & she responds, "Nothing.", what is the message? It depends on the context. It could mean that nothing is wrong, but more than likely it means something is very wrong! The first intent (communicating wants/needs) is requires an intended response from the listener. Usually those familiar with the AAC user don't have much trouble anticipating or understanding expression of wants/needs. However, what about placing an order for burger & fries from Wendy's? It is particularly important to make the message as efficient as possible in less familiar settings for less familiar communication partners. 2. Information transfer requires specific content making the message more complex with more novel utterances or messages than predictable ones (like wants/needs). 3. Social closeness has varying levels of intent – from casual closeness to true

intimacy between friends & family. The interaction is more important than the content. For example, telling someone you love them – the doing is more important than the words themselves when you say or hear it for the first time. 4. Politeness is important across all settings. Its importance moves across cultures though the definition of politeness may vary. Social conventions vary within homes, work places, educational settings, & recreational settings.   Table 1.2 on pg 9 provides you distinct characteristics of interactions. Review this table to get a broader perspective of how your critical thinking is needed to address the issues related to assessing & planning for interactions through AAC. 5. The last area to remember is the individual using the AAC's ability to communicate with themselves. Internal conversation is ongoing, but the role of AAC her may be to provide lists, calendar reminders, or other organizational planning tasks needed.

Slide 8

What is it like?

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Read accounts in your book – pgs. 5-8
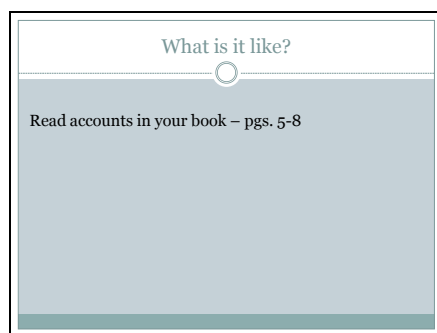
What is it like to be unable to communicate? We have been blessed in our development to be verbal communicators, able to move in & out of circumstances within our culture with minimal disruptions. Have you ever been in a situation where your communication was limited? I studied in Costa Rica for six weeks where I lived with a family, immersed in the culture & language. I had studied NO Spanish – only had Latin & French. I was often very quiet & unable to contribute to conversations – for several days I was totally dependent on others to

communicate my messages & to interpret instructions for me. I was unable to travel alone because I couldn't ask for assistance. It struck me during those six weeks how our clients with aphasia or using AAC must feel – you know what you want to say, but are unable to say it. It was quite a humbling experience for me. Empathy can be an important skill in understanding the needs of individuals using AAC.   Take the time now to read personal stories of individuals presented in your book beginning on page 5.