Creating Communication Communities

Linda Burkhart, Julie Freed, Emily Thatcher, Amy Staples, Evette Edmister, Shirley Robinson, Gayle Porter

Who are we?

• Emily Thatcher: Iowa Department of Education
• Julie Freed: Grantwood Area Education Agency, Iowa
• Amy Staples & Evette Edmister: University of Northern Iowa
• Shirley Robinson: Santa Clara County Office of Education (California)
• Linda Burkhart – Maryland
• Gayle Porter – Melbourne, Australia

Shared connection
Pragmatic Organization Dynamic Displays (PODD)
5 day workshop

5 day PODD workshop

• Principles and features of PODD applied to a range of access methods and visual/auditory presentations
• Aided language intervention
  – Immersion – aided language stimulation
  – Dynamic assessment – intervention
  – Developing operational skills, etc.

5 day PODD workshop

• Shared concepts fundamental to PODD design and implementation
  – communication autonomy
  – communication accessibility
  – meeting varied communication requirements
    • Multi-modal communication
  – the development of communication competence
  – HABITS for communication AT ANY TIME

Ownership of AAC system is not enough!

• Need opportunities to learn to use the AAC system
  – Develop competencies over time
• Partners (communities) who interact in a way that support individuals learning and use of AAC
5 day PODD workshop
The importance of supportive social network
- Communication partner teaching-learning
- Creating communication communities

PODD Communication community
- Everyone communicates
  - Need to understand others and be understood
- AAC is one way people communicate
  - Multi-modal communication
- Everyone’s contribution is valued equally regardless of how it is expressed
  - Opportunity and response to AAC same as speech

PODD Community capacity building
Knowledge, judgment & skills
- Attitudes, beliefs
- Policy and practices
- Individual’s partners, social networks
- Whole school / service
- Whole community

PODD Communication Access
Communication Resource Centre, Scope, Victoria (2011)
- Able to go into shops and services and know that people will
  - treat you with dignity and respect talk directly to you
  - give you time to get your message across
  - listen to your message
  - be willing to use other methods of communicating
  "the most important thing is for all of us to be aware that communication is a two-way process. Both people need to take some responsibility for making the communication effective and successful."

Features of Communication Accessible schools
- Problem solving how every child can understand others and express themselves
- AAC systems readily available for AUTONOMOUS communication at ANY TIME
  - Expectation that students may have messages to communicate/share
- Extra time to communicate using aided AAC
  - Active problem-solving to enable this to occur with available resources
- Interaction patterns support children’s autonomous communication
  - Able to initiate their own messages, not just answering adult questions
  - Child’s initiatives and messages using AAC responded to as if message was spoken
  - Focus on child’s varied communication requirements, not just adult “curriculum” agenda

Communication Resource Centre, Scope Victoria (2011)


Features of Communication Accessible schools

- Staff use AAC
  - to support children to understand (as required)
  - to provide opportunities for children to experience their method of communication used in genuine interactions (immersion)
- Everyone’s contribution is valued equally regardless of how it is expressed
- AAC training and use extends beyond the school
  - engages families and communities
- Administration supports staff and resources for AAC
  - supporting communication in the mission statement

The dream’s easy – making it happen is more of a puzzle!

Establishing Circles of Communication Partners:
The State Support Piece to the Puzzle

Iowa Literacy & Communication Projects

Establishing a Communication Community: Four Pieces to the Puzzle
Grant Wood Area Education Agency

Our Puzzle Pieces
1. Professional Development
2. Resources to Support These Efforts
3. Networks of Support
4. Recognition of Roles & Responsibilities

1. Professional Development

- Varied Formats/Audiences
  - Advanced 7-Day Training for SLP Core Team
  - Introductory level 2-Day PODD training workshops
  - One day “Practice with the PODD” workshops for additional communication partners
  - Offered multiple times throughout the school year
  - On-going and extended deeper learning opportunities for SLPs
1. Professional Development

- **Content**: Focus on Building Communication Community
  - AAC System Organization/Operation
  - Hands-On Practice Time
  - Belief System
  - Stressed Importance of Aided Input
  - Provide Wait time
    - Create Communication Opportunities
    - Encourage Initiation

2. Resources

- Agency and Local District Support
  - Supported communication partner attendance at PODD training workshops
  - Committed resources to acquire PODD software
  - Created a collection of various PODD books for short-term check-out for use by IEP teams
  - Districts covered cost of creating a PODD book for individual students

3. Networks of Support

- Created a regional PODD SLP Steering Team to provide area support
- Hosted two Parent Night events: PODD Gala
  - Means of introducing family members to the PODD
  - Networking of parents
  - Venue for sharing parent testimonies
  - Q & A
- Tied the use of AAC to Literacy Instruction
  - Without a means to communicate literacy instruction is quite difficult

4. Recognize Roles & Responsibilities of All Communication Partners

- AAC Integration needs to be supported by ALL IEP team members
  - AAC instruction is not the sole responsibility of the SLP
    - Provide integration support through consultation and collaboration
    - SLPs can MODEL for other partners
  - Need to acknowledge and reinforce that a comprehensive language system is critical for meaningful instructional opportunities

Share Evidence of Success

- Collecting Video Clips of Successful AAC Integration— with our own local students
  - Varied Educational/Home Settings
  - Students of various ages and disabilities
  - Anecdotal reports
  - Verbal Testimonies

Next Pieces to Our Puzzle...

- Expansion of communication communities
  - More parent connection nights
  - Sibling partner training
  - Classroom Peer training
- Focus on Early Childhood Classroom Communication Support
  - “Stay, Play, Talk” model (Kathy Thiemann-Bourque Nancy Brady, Life Span Institute, University of Kansas)
Establishing Circles of Communication Partners: Two Pieces to the Puzzle

University of Northern Iowa

Our Pieces of the Puzzle
1. Research Studies
2. Pre-service education for students

1. Research Studies

• Research projects completed by graduate students

• Comprehensive Communication and Literacy Research Project
  – A research study completed by faculty at the University of Northern Iowa under contract with the Iowa Department of Education using funds made available by the United States Department of Education under IDEA.
  
  • The contents regarding the study do not necessarily represent the policy of the United States Department of Education [or the Iowa Department of Education], and you should not assume endorsement by the Federal [or Iowa] government.

Research: Comprehensive Communication and Literacy Project

• Ongoing professional development with
  – 10 teams in Year One
    • 3 to 4 members per team
  – Week long professional development course
  – Contact once a month
  – Video conferencing twice a semester as a group
  – Assistance with problem solving as needed

Findings

• Increased awareness of the need to have access to communication

Increased Use Of AAC Tools In The Classroom

Findings

• Establishment of collaborative communities
  – Trouble shooting students’ needs (access, opportunity, etc.)
  – Requests for ongoing professional development
  – Requests for assistance expanding team/community membership
Student Findings

• 32 out of 36 children exhibited a change in one or more of the following communication skills
  • higher number of the total interactions and/or specific communication functions
  • increased variety of communication functions and/or range of semantic features (vocabulary representation).
  • change in the clarity or complexity of the mode of communication

2. Pre-Service

• Bringing professional development and what was learned from classrooms in the state into the University classroom
  • Research – providing opportunities for undergraduate and graduate students to receive hands on experiences
  • Preparation for future employment and communication communities

Profile - Santa Clara County

• 32 school districts
• Large densely populated geographic area with 15 different cities (50 miles from the north to southern part)
• Diverse Population

SCCOE Special Education Programs

- COE provides variety of services to districts (SDC)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Infant</td>
<td>237</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charter Schools</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alternative Education</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Licensed Care Institutions</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home/Hospital</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special of SDC programs</td>
<td>1,573</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2,132</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Classes</th>
<th>Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Autism</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>333</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basic</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>797</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dual/Hard of Hearing</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional Disturbance</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medically Fragile</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orthopedic Impairment</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skilled Nursing</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>1,573</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
FY 11-12 Special Education Budget by Fund

Fund 820
$74.58M
District Requested Programs
$66.44M
(Federal & State Resources: E.g., Clusters, IDEA Preschool & Lottery)

Other Centralized Costs
$8.14M
(Sp. Ed. Dept. Admin., Indirect Charges, Custodial & Facilities)

Fund 882
$6.49M
Medi-Cal & MAA
$4M
Title I (Part A)
$851.20K
Title III
$24.01K
Workability I
$135.54K
Categorical (Tier III)
$518.58K
Preschool Desired Result (Part B)
$40.00K
Early Start (Part C)
$787.56K
Infant
Discretionary
$52.89K
Charters
$1.08M

Fund 932
$42.21K
Donations held by Clusters
$42.21K*

Fund 950
$10.28M
Early Start Program
$3.24M
San Andreas Regional Center
$1.00M
Non-Public Schools
$6.04M

1000 Employees in just the special ed program of the county
10 Principals
200 SDC teachers
68 FTEs (SPHC)
50 SLPs
24 OT/PT
18 Psychologists
18 Nurses
12 Vision and O/M Specialists
11 APE Specialists
11 Audiologists
11 Interpreters
8 Mental Health
8 Vocational Ed Specialists

Total 2011-12 Budget: $91 Million Dollars
Setting priorities
Ø Student Population—
90% of our student population have complex communication needs requiring AAC systems
severe auditory processing issues
non-verbal/limited verbal
Significantly high level of behavior plans in autism and basic programs.
High percentage 1:1 aides for behavior/behavior intervention services
Parents request high level of pull out individual Speech Therapy services to improve communication

Need for Change
Culture/Paradigm shift around Communication

Culture Shift — New focus on communication
Communication needs to be modeled in a way that students can understand and reproduce.
Communication happens all day every day
All students can and do communicate
> Communication is fundamental to all activities
> Communication is not an adult directed task
Students must have a functional communication system
All types of communication must be honored and recognized so that it is functional for what the student wants to say

Communication System to Stem across Programs and Abilities

Comprehensive system for both receptive input and expressive output
> Allows students to be immersed in language learning throughout the day
> Allows students to communicate what they want to say when they want to say it (over time)
> Focuses on “how to” of AAC communication
> Pragmatically based so that functions of language are valued
> Meets needs of all levels of communication
> Grows with student need with consistent navigation as a student moves from class to class

Training
Critical Piece of the Puzzle

Variety of training scenarios
> Five day training for all SLPs
> Two training for Administrators
> Two training for Teachers, Support Staff and Parents together (ongoing)
> One day training for ParaEducators

Starting the Journey

Culture Shift— New focus on communication
> Communication needs to be modeled in a way that students can understand and reproduce.
> Communication happens all day every day
> All students can and do communicate
> Communication is fundamental to all activities
> Communication is not an adult directed task
> Students must have a functional communication system
> All types of communication must be honored and recognized so that it is functional for what the student wants to say

Making the shift— Putting the pieces together

Communication happens all day every day
All students can and do communicate
Communication happens all day every day
Communication is fundamental to all activities
Communication is not an adult directed task
Students must have a functional communication system
All types of communication must be honored and recognized so that it is functional for what the student wants to say

Training
Critical Piece of the Puzzle

Variety of training scenarios
> Five day training for all SLPs
> Two training for Administrators
> Two training for Teachers, Support Staff and Parents together (ongoing)
> One day training for ParaEducators

Starting the Journey

Culture/Paradigm shift around Communication
> Culture Shift — New focus on communication
> Communication needs to be modeled in a way that students can understand and reproduce.
> Communication happens all day every day
> All students can and do communicate
> Communication is fundamental to all activities
> Communication is not an adult directed task
> Students must have a functional communication system
> All types of communication must be honored and recognized so that it is functional for what the student wants to say

Making the shift— Putting the pieces together

Communication happens all day every day
All students can and do communicate
Communication happens all day every day
Communication is fundamental to all activities
Communication is not an adult directed task
Students must have a functional communication system
All types of communication must be honored and recognized so that it is functional for what the student wants to say

Communication System to Stem across Programs and Abilities

Comprehensive system for both receptive input and expressive output
> Allows students to be immersed in language learning throughout the day
> Allows students to communicate what they want to say when they want to say it (over time)
> Focuses on “how to” of AAC communication
> Pragmatically based so that functions of language are valued
> Meets needs of all levels of communication
> Grows with student need with consistent navigation as a student moves from class to class

Training
Critical Piece of the Puzzle

Variety of training scenarios
> Five day training for all SLPs
> Two training for Administrators
> Two training for Teachers, Support Staff and Parents together (ongoing)
> One day training for ParaEducators

Starting the Journey

Culture/Paradigm shift around Communication
> Culture Shift — New focus on communication
> Communication needs to be modeled in a way that students can understand and reproduce.
> Communication happens all day every day
> All students can and do communicate
> Communication is fundamental to all activities
> Communication is not an adult directed task
> Students must have a functional communication system
> All types of communication must be honored and recognized so that it is functional for what the student wants to say

Making the shift— Putting the pieces together

Communication happens all day every day
All students can and do communicate
Communication happens all day every day
Communication is fundamental to all activities
Communication is not an adult directed task
Students must have a functional communication system
All types of communication must be honored and recognized so that it is functional for what the student wants to say

Communication System to Stem across Programs and Abilities

Comprehensive system for both receptive input and expressive output
> Allows students to be immersed in language learning throughout the day
> Allows students to communicate what they want to say when they want to say it (over time)
> Focuses on “how to” of AAC communication
> Pragmatically based so that functions of language are valued
> Meets needs of all levels of communication
> Grows with student need with consistent navigation as a student moves from class to class
Successes Supporting the Journey

Wowe thank you for the training and for helping us understand. It is not just about the communication but about the relationship. The very first day after the training we took our PODD book home and showed it to Melissa. I guess she had been using it in class for a while because she gave us a big smile and pointed to “More to Say” That was the beginning of our journey. Three months later, we now “talk” and laugh with our daughter who has never said a word in her 14 years of life but she sure has lots to say. As a dad, when I heard she was retarded, I had no expectations of her. I guess she had none of me either. Some days I am not sure whether to laugh or cry. I guess I am still overwhelmed knowing what a delightful daughter I have not known for 14 years.” (Father talking about his daughter)

Budget

- Cost for initial implementation
  - $400,000 to $500,000 each year for first 2 years
- Secure sustainable funds
  - School Based Medi-cal/MAA funds
  - Categorical Funds
  - Grants
- Cost vs. Results vs. Cost Savings
  - Students more functional
  - Parents happy with services
  - Reduced requests to pay for outside services
  - Reduced need for ABA and behavior specialists
  - Reduction in need for 1:1 aides
  - Reduction in workman’s comp costs

Support/Reinforcement

- Administrative Support/Part of the Communication Community
- Online videos of Student use/ classroom modeling
  - Ongoing SLP support
    - Changes in service delivery
    - Value added service for teachers
- Commercial production of PODD books/Availability is high
- Monthly PODD Communication news published in SCCOE Newsletter by Assistant Superintendent
- Trainings for writing meaningful, attainable and measurable IEP communication goals.

Resources/Outreach

- Partnership with inhouse PrintShop
  - Books printed professionally in bulk for cost saving
  - 60 hours of SLP time
  - Collaborate with local university
  - University student intern volunteers
  - PODD CDs on serve for easy access
  - Sharing customizations/pages
  - Use workman’s comp staff/community volunteers to assemble books
  - Reach out to train NPS, Private SLPs, ABA specialists, district personnel

Next steps

- Create a parent/staff support teams
- Secure long term budget priority
- Develop a system to mentor teachers in the classroom
- Empower staff to “speak” about communication with confidence in IEPs/all the time.
- Create training videos for practice and collaboration between parents/staff/community
- Pilot a change in service delivery model for SLP services

It is a Process!

- It will take time!
- Changing beliefs
- Developing skills
- Automaticity and integration in practice
OK to just get started!

- Implementing with a single individual and her partners or a single classroom can begin right away
- More comprehensive implementation for developing a communication community may require more extensive planning and support

Success Breeds Success

- Slowly spreads as people talk about successes
- Build towards a critical mass – tipping point

Go back to the purpose of communication

- Changing service models
- What are the real communication requirements?
- Now and in the future
- Autonomy!

Measure Everything Against the Long term Destination:

For an individual to be able to say
Whatever they want to say, whenever they want to say it!

Remember it takes time to change cultures

A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step!

Lao-tzu