

AMPLIFYING ALL VOICES: AUGMENTATIVE & ALTERNATIVE COMMUNICATION (AAC)

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Disclosures

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Presentation Overview

1

Describe what AAC is and why it's used

2

Identify and debunk frequent AAC myths

3

State when and how to implement AAC

What is AAC?

“**AAC** means all of the ways that someone communicates besides talking.” (ASHA, 2023)



No-Tech / Low-Tech AAC



- Nonverbals
 - Facial expressions, Body language, Gestures
- Sign language
- Writing
- Drawing
- Pointing to pictures, letters, written words

High-Tech AAC

- An app on a tablet
- Computer w/ a “voice” (SGD)

AAC Myths

Communication is a basic human right

“Prerequisites” for AAC

FALSE

“There are no thinking skills, test scores, or other milestones that you need to reach before AAC can help.”
(ASHA, 2023)

AAC is a “last resort”

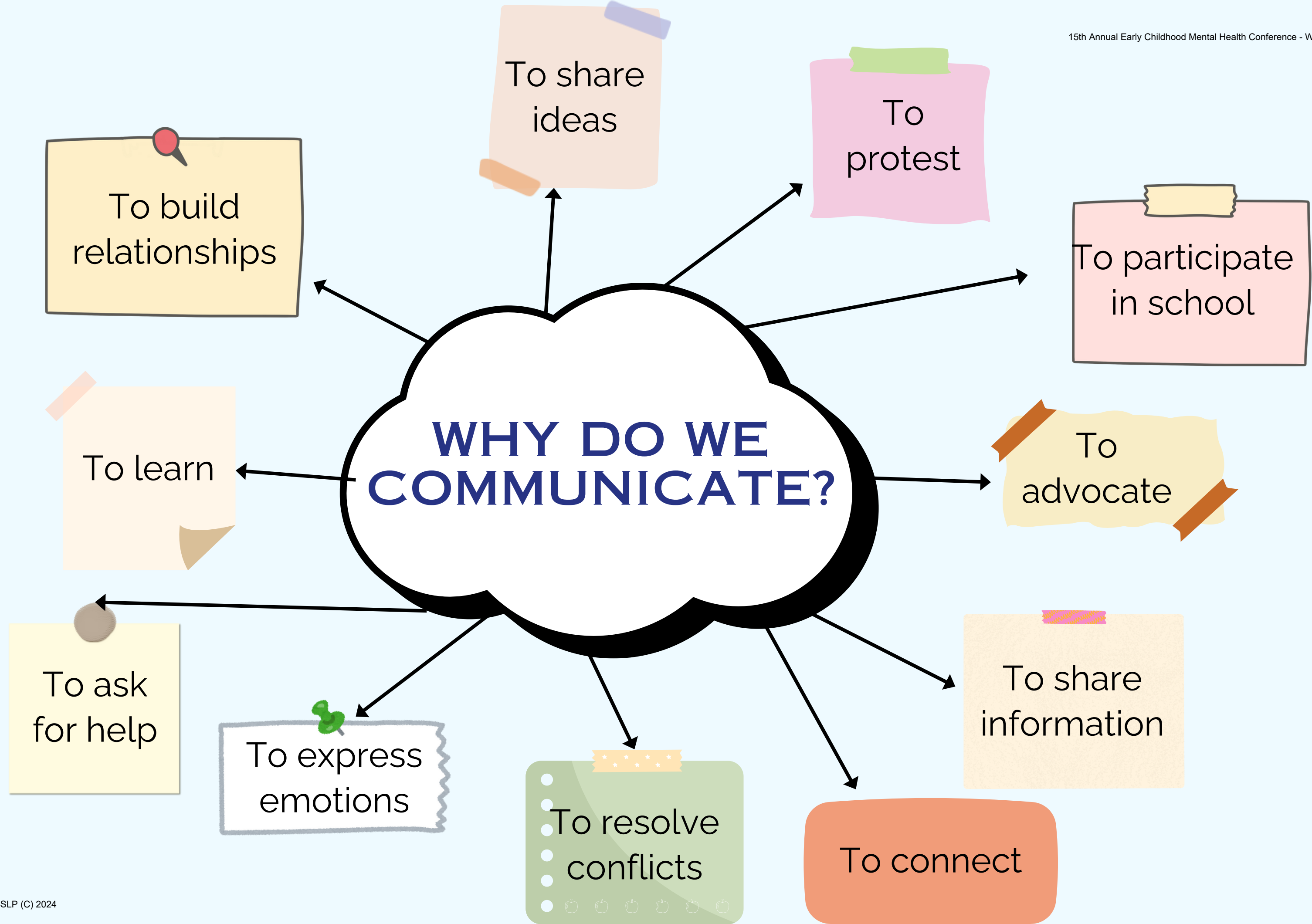
FALSE

- It's never too early to start
- Promote multimodal communication

AAC will prevent children from talking

FALSE

- Use of AAC can improve verbal speech



Diving Deeper

A 2021 study from Moore et al. found:

- Higher rates of anxiety and depression were found in extremely preterm infants at 10 year of age
- Having an IEP was correlated with depression
- Lower levels of academic achievement were found in children with a lower gestational age

Late Talkers

- Caregivers most commonly bring up 2 concerns at the pediatrician's office: language skills and disruptive behavior (Sheldrick et al., 2012)
- Poorer language skills are associated with increased disruptive behaviors (Roberts et al., 2018)
- Late talkers between 24-30 months were twice as likely to have severe tantrums (Manning et al., 2019)

Teenagers

16-18 year olds w/ clinical mental illness were found to have poorer vocabulary skills and poorer quality of communication with their parents compared to adolescents w/o mental illness (Clarke et al., 2022)

Autism

Autistic children have a significantly higher risk for suicide compared to the general population (Rybcznski et al., 2022)

Various Diagnoses

Increased rates of depression, anxiety, and/or suicidal ideology are also found in:

- people who stutter (Tichenor et al., 2023)
- children with language disorders (Donolato et al., 2021)
- children with feeding disorders (Iron-Segev et al., 2020)
- adolescents with a history of Childhood Apraxia of Speech (Lewis et al., 2021)

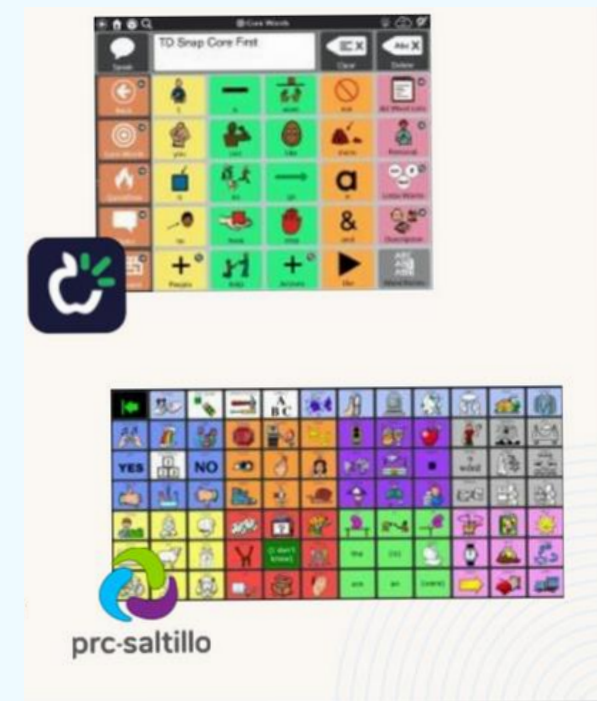
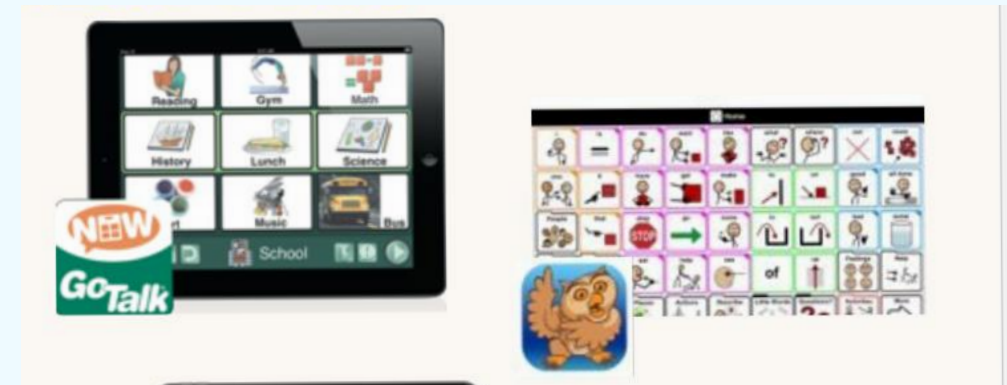
WHY use AAC

- Decrease frustration
- Increase independence
- Repair communication breakdowns
- Increase participation
- Grow communication skills
- Access to reliable communication regardless of communication partner, physical factors, and setting



WHEN to use AAC

- As speech is developing
- When a child isn't talking much
- When a child isn't talking at all / speech has not developed
- To support speech that's hard to understand
- If speech is lost or deteriorating
- When speech is temporarily not possible
- When speech is intermittent or unreliable



AAC Funding Sources

Schools

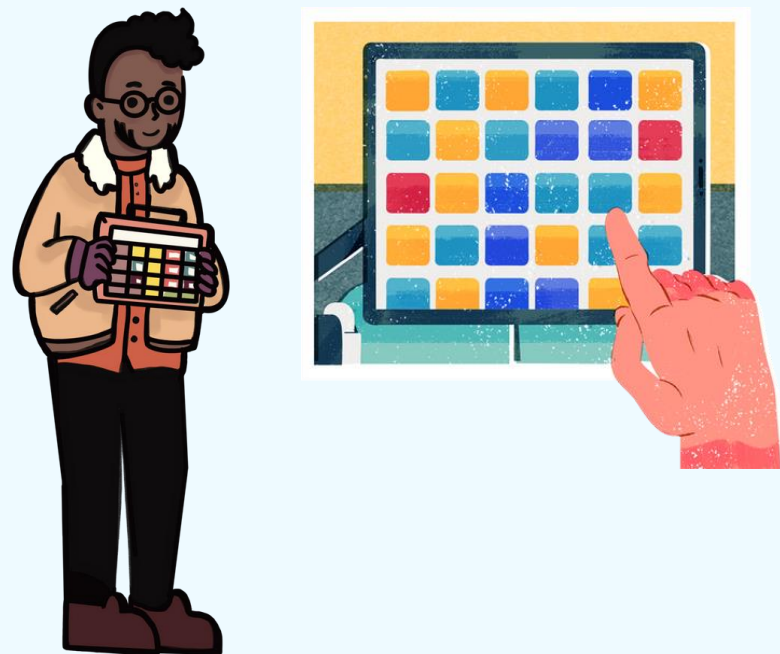
- Families can request an AAC evaluation
- Have a district assistive tech (AT) specialist
- Device is funded by the school district

Insurance

- Device companies: PRC, AbleNet, Tobii Dynavox
- Grants

Immediate Take-Aways

- Have and use the AAC device during all waking hours
- Model, model, and model some more!



AAC - Direct Select



AAC - Switch Scanning



AAC - Switch Scanning cont.



AAC - Eye Gaze



QUESTIONS

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