

# Communication, AAC and the IEP

## Presenters

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Image source: ucdenver.edu

## What is AAC?

Any device, system, or method that improves the ability of a child with a communication impairment to communicate effectively.

## Augmentative AND Alternative Communication

- Multimodal communication
- AAC is not only a *speech-generating device (SGD)*
  - Sign
  - Non-verbals
    - Facial expression
    - Gestures
    - Eye Gaze
  - Communication book / board
  - Assistive Technology

*Key: VALUE ALL COMMUNICATION...*

# Protections for Students with Disabilities

## **IDEA – Individuals with Disabilities Education Act**

- Specially Designed Instruction
- FAPE - Free and Appropriate Public Education
- IEP - Individualized Education Program  
Legally binding document. If services/supports written in the IEP, school is out of compliance if they do not provide.
- Procedural Safeguards

## **Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973**

## **Title II of the ADA**

# Requirements of IDEA Special Factors

## IDEA §300.324(a)(2)(i)-(v) Consideration of special factors.

### The IEP Team must—

- (i) In the case of a child whose behavior impedes the child’s learning or that of others, consider the use of positive behavioral interventions and supports, and other strategies, to address that behavior;
- (ii) In the case of a child with limited English proficiency, consider the language needs of the child as those needs relate to the child’s IEP;
- (iii) In the case of a child who is blind or visually impaired, provide for instruction in Braille and the use of Braille unless the IEP Team determines, after an evaluation of the child’s reading and writing skills, needs, and appropriate reading and writing media (including an evaluation of the child’s future needs for instruction in Braille or the use of Braille), that instruction in Braille or the use of Braille is not appropriate for the child;
- (iv) Consider the communication needs of the child, and in the case of a child who is deaf or hard of hearing, consider the child’s language and communication needs, opportunities for direct communications with peers and professional personnel in the child’s language and communication mode, academic level, and full range of needs, including opportunities for direct instruction\* in the child’s language and communication mode; and
- (v) Consider whether the child needs assistive technology devices and services.

The IEP team must determine if any of these factors are relevant for the child and, if so, address the factor in the child’s IEP.

- **IEP - Consideration of Special Factors**

\*Direct Instruction –includes “modeling” use of AT in child’s mode of communication

# Requirements of IDEA

## Assistive Technology

**AT is a tool to increase a student's opportunities for education in the LRE, social interactions, extracurricular activities, and potential for meaningful employment.**

- Need for AT devices or services to receive FAPE must be considered at each IEP meeting.
  - **IEP - Consideration of Special Factors.**
    - Check the box!
    - Some schools will have additional AT documents to complete.
    - Use Accommodations section to document needs.
- A child's need for AT must be determined on a case-by-case basis and could be special education, related services or supplementary aids and services.
- Decisions regarding use of AT device or service in other settings outside school must be made on an individual basis.
- Schools may access alternative funding sources to defray costs of AT devices and services. Schools may not delay in providing the device/service while waiting for payment from another source.
- Schools may not compel parents to file an insurance claim and may not condition provision of equipment or services on filing or approval of a claim.

## Requirements of IDEA

### AT Device

*“An item can be AT  
for one student,  
but not for  
another.”*

### **IDEA §300.5 Assistive technology device.**

Assistive technology device means any item, piece of equipment, or product system, whether acquired commercially off the shelf, modified, or customized, that is used to increase, maintain, or improve the functional capabilities of a child with a disability. The term does not include a medical device that is surgically implanted, or the replacement of such device.

- Individual need determined through specific evaluation.
- If purchased by school, belongs to school, may be shared with other students.
  - Is it individualized to student’s unique needs?
  - Is it available to student in all environments throughout day?
- A district must provide device for use at home if necessary for FAPE.
- If purchased by family, belongs to student/family and meant for exclusive use of student.

# Requirements of IDEA AT Service

## IDEA §300.6 Assistive technology service.

Any service that directly assists a child with a disability in the selection, acquisition, or use of an assistive technology device. The term includes—

- (a) The **evaluation** of the needs of a child with a disability, including a functional evaluation of the child in the child's customary environment;
- (b) Purchasing, leasing, or otherwise providing for the **acquisition** of assistive technology devices by children with disabilities;
- (c) Selecting, designing, fitting, customizing, adapting, applying, **maintaining**, repairing, or replacing assistive technology devices;
- (d) **Coordinating** and using other therapies, interventions, or services with assistive technology devices, such as those associated with existing education and rehabilitation plans and programs;
- (e) **Training or technical assistance for a child with a disability** or, if appropriate, that **child's family**; and
- (f) **Training or technical assistance for professionals** (including individuals providing education or rehabilitation services), employers, or other individuals who provide services to, employ, or are otherwise substantially involved in the major life functions of that child.

# Requirements of IDEA

Staff supports  
that enable  
student to  
advance in  
attaining  
their annual  
goals.

## IDEA §300.320(a)(4)

Each child's IEP must contain:

(4) A statement of the special education and related services and supplementary aids and services, based on peer-reviewed research to the extent practicable, to be provided to the child, or on behalf of the child, and a statement of the **program modifications or supports for school personnel** that will be provided to enable the child—

- (i) To advance appropriately toward attaining the annual goals;
- (ii) To be involved in and make progress in the general education curriculum in accordance with paragraph (a)(1) of this section, and to participate in extracurricular and other nonacademic activities; and
- (iii) To be educated and participate with other children with disabilities and nondisabled children in the activities described in this section...

### IEP page – Accommodations and Modifications

**-Accom/Modifications/Supplementary Aides and Services**

**-Statement of Program Modifications or  
Supports for School Personnel**



## Common IEP Concerns

### Transfer to New School

**New school must provide FAPE to child and provide services comparable to those described in current IEP, until...**

- **new IEP implemented or**
- **new evaluation completed and**
  - **child determined not eligible or**
  - **new IEP implemented.**
- **Out-of-state transfer:** Re-evaluation is standard. School must implement existing IEP to best of their ability during interim.
- **Out-of-district transfer:** District (LEA) likely to complete a new evaluation. School must implement existing IEP to best of their ability during interim.
- **Within-district transfer:** Unlikely a new evaluation will be needed. School must implement existing IEP to best of their ability.

**Procedural Safeguards available to parents**

## Common IEP Concerns:

## Requesting an AAC Evaluation

## Who Pays

## Parents Prefer “Outside” AAC Evaluation

Parents have the right to request an Assistive Technology and Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) assessment to support their child’s communication needs at school.

- IEP Meeting: Evaluation written into IEP, include professional experience/expertise required for valid assessment results. School pays.
- Submit written, signed, dated request to school. Expect to receive PPWN\* with school’s decision. Schools pays.
  - Yes. Discuss professional experience/expertise required for valid results and sign consent to evaluate.
  - No. Parents can disagree, **procedural safeguards**.
- Families may choose to pay for an independent AAC evaluation and share results with the school. Such evaluations must be considered by the IEP Team, as long as the evaluation meets the school’s criteria. However, schools are not required to accept these results or recommendations nor implement them. Families pay.

\*Parental Prior Written Notice

# Specially Designed Instruction

# Sample evaluation request language

- I request that my child be given a comprehensive Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) assessment, by a certified Speech Language Pathologist with a minimum of 5 years of clinical expertise serving children with severe expressive and receptive language needs who use AAC, qualified to identify appropriate AAC tools, strategies, curricular accommodations/modifications, and instruction to my child and his IEP team, as necessary, so that my child can make progress toward his IEP goals.
- I request that my child be given a comprehensive Assistive Technology (AT) assessment, by a certified Assistive Technologist, qualified to identify appropriate AT tools, strategies, curricular accommodations/modifications, and specialized instruction for my child to meet his unique needs (and AT support to his IEP team, as necessary) so that he can make progress toward his IEP goals.

*"School Based AAC Evaluation," Paul Visvader, MA CCC-SLP.*

<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/57c86c3cff7c506bc7a8fdbf/t/58d4102559cc687828b40507/1490292777064/School-Based+AAC+Evaluation.pdf>

Common IEP  
Concerns:

Procedural  
Safeguard

IEE

## IDEA § 300.502 Independent educational evaluation.

A parent is entitled to one independent educational evaluation (IEE) at public expense each time the district conducts an evaluation with which the parent disagrees.

- An IEE is a parent right, not a request the school can deny.
  - School's options are to
    - 1) pay for evaluation or
    - 2) initiate a due process hearing to attempt to show the school's evaluation was appropriate, and to
    - 3) do one or the other without **unnecessary delay**.
- Parents do not have to provide a reason for their disagreement.
- Parents have right to IEE if school did **not** evaluate in area of concern.
- **Schools pay for IEE**, may have criteria for external evaluators/providers

Common IEP  
Concerns:

Who Pays

*“Includes feature  
matching...”*

**Remember...**

**IDEA §300.6 Assistive technology service.**

Any service that directly assists a child with a disability in the selection, acquisition, or use of an assistive technology device. The term includes—

(b) Purchasing, leasing, or otherwise providing for the acquisition of assistive technology devices by children with disabilities;

(c) Selecting, designing, fitting, customizing, adapting, applying, maintaining, repairing, or replacing assistive technology devices;

***However...*** other funding sources can be utilized

- Medicaid, private insurance
- Telecommunication Equipment Distribution Program (TEDP)
  - Includes people with speech impairment
- Family Support 360 Program (families with children on this program)

In these cases, the device belongs to the child, not the school.

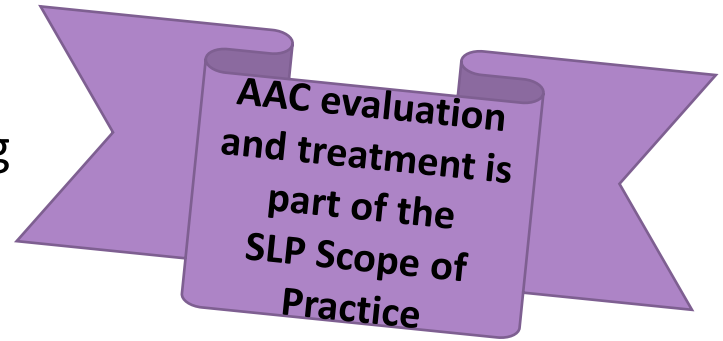
Common IEP  
Concerns

Supporting  
Students,  
Parents,  
and  
School  
Personnel

## Scenarios

SLP has insufficient experience, or training is not current:

- Seek continuing education
- Reach out to a mentor



School personnel\* not experienced, uncomfortable with child's AAC system:

- Write into IEP - training/TA/support for school personnel
  - Inservice training, PD
- Reach out to a mentor, seek continuing education (manufacturer may offer free CEUs)

Parents hesitant to “rock the boat” and advocate for their child...

- Understand, exercise your rights
- Reach out to SD Parent Connection

\*Extend access to training/support to parents

## Common IEP Concerns

### Supporting the Process

*“No child or adult should be excluded from AAC services on the basis of being too something – too young, too old, too cognitively (or motorically or linguistically) impaired. Perhaps Mirenda (1993) summed it up best when she concluded that breathing is the only prerequisite necessary for communication.”*  
(Beukelman & Light, 2020)

## Scenarios

Parent concerns regarding need/appropriateness for evaluation for AAC is disregarded; justifications for delay/denial such as child “not ready,” must demonstrate x skill “first,” will interfere with development of speech...

- Students are not required to achieve pre-requisite skills or levels before AAC is considered or implemented
- AAC does not prevent or stop speech from developing or returning; AAC supports natural speech capabilities

Dongilli, Hakel, & Beukelman, 1992; Kasari et al., 2014; Ladtkow & Culp, 1992; Light, Beesley, & Collier, 1988; Miller, Light, & Schlosser, 2006; Ronski et al., 2010; Schlosser & Wendt, 2008

Lived Experience

*“AAC isn't the most important thing here.*

*Your child is.”*

## Autism Acceptance? Not without autistic voices.

### A message to: Parents

“ You have a wonderful child! Yes, AAC is amazing, but what matters is your child. Love your child. Play with them. Support them. Communicate with them. Learn from them; their methods of communication and otherwise. Have a relationship; value that relationship and your child as they are. Look at them as a person. A wonderful, disabled person. And yes, let's figure out AAC options that seem like the best fit for them - AAC is very freeing. But AAC isn't the most important thing here. Your child is. ”

### Tuttle

AAC user from Massachusetts, USA





## Parent Perspective

What I Know  
Now... That  
I Wish I Knew  
Then...

- **Communication is give and take. It is about engaging with another person; the connection is a powerful piece.** Sometimes we have not laid the foundational skill as to the need to engage another person for communication to occur.
- **Follow the child's lead. AAC needs to meet the needs of the child to communicate.** What do they want to talk about? To whom? Interests and preferences matter. Example- Show & Tell
- **Help the child "own" their technology.** How is the AT or AAC customized for them, empowering them, allowing them to make something happen in their environment?
- **Listen to the child.** If they do not want to use their AAC, find out why!
- **Find the people to help carry the load.** Who shares your vision and how are they a part of the Team?

Common IEP  
Concerns:  
Writing SMART  
AAC goals

S  
•Specific

M  
•Measurable

A  
•Achievable/Attainable

R  
•Relevant/Realistic

T  
•Time-based/bound

## What are SMART goals?

- Language of goals should be understandable to parents/school personnel.
- Goals help us “see” when a student has success...

<https://docs.google.com/file/d/0ByEKORajLVWzQXY2QnJnbjZZcFk/edit>

- This document provides a list of goals related to expressive language and operational and strategic competence.

[From https://praacticalaac.org/praactical/praactical-goals-that-matter/](https://praacticalaac.org/praactical/praactical-goals-that-matter/)

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[www.speechandlanguagekids.com/write-iep-goals-guide-parents-professionals/](http://www.speechandlanguagekids.com/write-iep-goals-guide-parents-professionals/)

- This link provides a basic template and tips/trick for writing IEP goals.
- Example goal using the template: By the end of the IEP cycle, xxx will use his/her communication device to identify his/her name and personal information in 4 out of 5 opportunities across 3 consecutive therapy sessions as measured by clinician data collection.

# Specially Designed Instruction

## Writing SMART AAC goals

A few examples...

S  
•Specific

M  
•Measurable

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### EARLIEST COMMUNICATOR:

To increase classroom participation and involvement by the end of the one-year IEP period, Tommy will direct the action of the teacher or peer using his AAC system (a single-switch voice output device or single 2" symbol on paper) by using the word "go" or "stop" given a level 1 prompt (general statement: "If I hear "go", I can start the blender.) and **10 seconds of wait time.** He will use a target word 2 times per classroom activity in 4/5 opportunities.

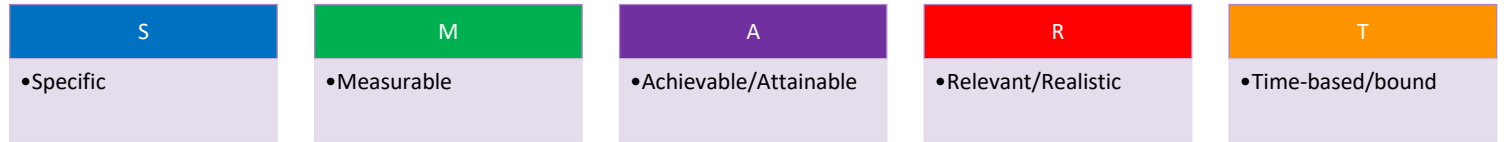
Baseline: Tommy requires a level 4 prompt to say "go" in classroom activities and does not yet use the word "stop".

<https://praacticalaac.org/practical/how-i-do-it-writing-iep-goals-for-students-who-use-aac-with-lauren-enders/>

# Specially Designed Instruction

## Writing SMART AAC goals

A few examples...



### EMERGENT COMMUNICATOR:

By the end of the one-year IEP period, given 2 models and color coding cues for parts of speech (I need a blue word and an orange word) along with a level 2 prompt (general suggestion: “You can tell me what kind of animal”) plus 10 seconds of wait time, Susie will use her AAC system (a tablet-based device with a voice output communication app or a 50 location communication board with cells hidden to show only 20 locations) to describe a target item using an adjective and a noun 1 time per 15-minute classroom activity in 4/5 classroom activities.

Baseline: Susie describes target items with a noun only with a level 2 prompt.

<https://praacticalaac.org/praactical/how-i-do-it-writing-iep-goals-for-students-who-use-aac-with-lauren-enders/>

# Specially Designed Instruction

## Writing SMART AAC goals

A few examples...

S  
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### MORE ADVANCED COMMUNICATOR:

By the end of the one-year IEP period, following 1 model along with a level 1 prompt (general suggestion: “tell me more in a sentence”) and 10 seconds of wait time, Johnny will use his AAC system (a tablet-based device with a voice output communication app or a 50 location core communication board with additional fringe in a flip book) to provide a one sentence response containing at least 3 words (subject verb object) 1 time per 30-minute classroom activity in 4/5 classroom activities.

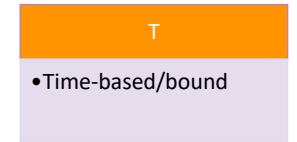
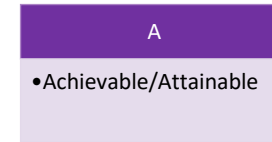
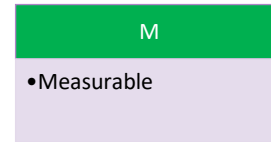
Baseline: Johnny provides 2 word sentences given a level 2 prompt.

<https://praacticalaac.org/practical/how-i-do-it-writing-iep-goals-for-students-who-use-aac-with-lauren-enders/>

# Specially Designed Instruction

## Writing SMART AAC goals

A few examples...



**Tip #5: In the IEP present level section explain why your student needs AAC in school and how your student uses AAC.**

Here's an example:

- Johnny uses an augmentative alternative communication (AAC) system to request and to comment. Johnny's AAC includes a 40 symbol core communication board, 6-8 symbol choice boards and a 10-12 symbol comment board. He is using this system in a variety of settings. This AAC system impacts his progress in the general education curriculum because it allows him to participate in class discussions and activities. This allows for assessment of what he knows.

Family /  
Professional  
Supports

South Dakota  
Parent Connection

Navigator Program

www.sdparent.org  
800-640-4553

## Online Supports

<https://prAACTicalAAC.org/website>

<https://communicationmatrix.org/>

[www.facebook.com/ECHOAAC](http://www.facebook.com/ECHOAAC)

[www.facebook.com/groups/SD.AAC.CoP](http://www.facebook.com/groups/SD.AAC.CoP)

## Funding

--Family Support 360

--Insurance (Medicaid, Private)

--School

--Telephone Adaptive Devices (TAD)

--<http://aacfundinghelp.com/>

## State Organizations

--Dakotalink, [www.dakotalink.net](http://www.dakotalink.net)

--Disability Rights SD, <https://drsdlaw.org/>

--South Dakota Parent Connection

**Guide:** *What Parents Should Know About Special Ed in SD*

## ECHO AAC Families

### What is ECHO AAC Families:

ECHO AAC Families is a **free** virtual learning opportunity for family members of individuals who use augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) to come together to learn tips for using and supporting AAC through both expert presentations and real-life case-based discussions. Plus, you'll meet other AAC users and families!



**Where:** Zoom links will be sent out via email prior to each session.

**If interested in joining, please contact**  
[aacpartnershipprogram@waisman.wisc.edu](mailto:aacpartnershipprogram@waisman.wisc.edu).



**Who:** Live sessions will be open to all family members of individuals who use AAC and AAC users.

**When:** ECHO AAC Families will take place on the following **Wednesdays from 7:00-8:30 PM:**

- **4/14:** Learning from the Perspectives of AAC Users
- **4/28:** Teaching Strategies to Support AAC
- **5/12:** Implementing AAC in the Home
- **5/26:** Implementing AAC in the Community

For more information about ECHO AAC, please contact [aacpartnershipprogram@waisman.wisc.edu](mailto:aacpartnershipprogram@waisman.wisc.edu) and follow us on Facebook at Waisman Center ECHO AAC!



Waisman Center  
University of Wisconsin-Madison



Thank you  
for your  
participation!

Please complete  
evaluation link  
posted in chat  
box...

**Thanks to our Lunch and Learn partner...**



**Center for Disabilities**

**Thanks to our guest presenters,  
Dr. Liz Hanson and Theresa Baldry.**

Contact information:

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