Building Tiered Supports for AAC - for Speech Language Pathologists heading to Tier 2

What is the path I am on if I am looking to develop my skills as an AAC Implementer?

Building Tiered Supports for AAC is a series of trainings designed to build supports and improve outcomes for our students with complex communication needs. **AAC Implementers** are an important part of this model! Let’s take a moment to look at the entire model your region is building so that you can get an idea of where you fit in:

### Tier 3: AAC Specialists

- In every system, whether that is a district or a county or a SELPA, we need AAC Specialists, or Leads. These are Speech-Language Pathologists who have received extensive training and opportunities to develop skills by working with a wide range of AAC users. These individuals will play a couple of important roles in your system:
  - They will be able to support you, as AAC Implementers, with assessing students with more complex access solutions, or who have more complex sensory, motor or linguistic needs.
  - They will be able to navigate external sources of funding for speech-generating devices when appropriate.
  - They will be available to train and support you as you develop your skills with AAC assessment and implementation planning in a expert consultant role.
  - They will provide AAC Foundations and other trainings as needed to others across your system.

### Tier 2: AAC Implementers

- As the speech-language pathologists directly working with and supporting our students with complex communication needs, our goal is to support you in developing competence and confidence in:
  - Completing AAC Needs Assessments for students when they require more individualized AAC tools. We will focus solely on those students who can "direct select," and will focus on those students who may need more emergent (e.g. Partner Plus), entry (e.g. Supertalker), intermediate (e.g. NovaCHAT), or mobile technologies with AAC Apps [click here to see Our Favorite Tools!]. Remember, you can call on your AAC Specialists or Leads for students with more unique and complex challenges.
  - Developing an overall plan for implementing skill development with selected AAC strategies and tools.
  - Coaching my team in identifying and selecting appropriate priorities and implementation strategies.

### Tier 1: AAC Foundations

- By building the knowledge and skill set of EVERY PERSON who supports a student with complex communication needs, we foster our student’s development of augmentative & alternative communication (AAC) competencies. We want all team members to be able to:
  - Recognize and identify the primary types of multimodal communication that can be honored, supported and developed in building a student’s communication repertoire.
  - Recognize, understand and use a range of strategies to support students in developing skill with aided forms of communication.
  - Build in participation opportunities for complex communicators through a variety of routines and activities and set up the school & instructional day through routines and activities that build "learners".
  - Model understanding of core words/symbols through "aided language modeling".
What else do SLPs want to know before starting?

Do I need to take AAC Foundations if I already have background and training in AAC?

Yes, for a couple of reasons:

1. In building a "system," one of the roles you will be focusing on is supporting your teams, (all the other members of the student's IEP team) in taking shared responsibility for making decisions about AAC strategies and tools and in supporting AAC skill development. That's what Foundations training is all about, and in order to provide that support, we need you to know the content and skills being introduced to your colleagues.

2. Building Tiered Supports for AAC is a layered training. There are foundational concepts that we review (for some of you) and introduce (for some of you). It is easier to dive into Tier 2 if we start from the same page and can expand on the common language and common frameworks set in Tier 1.

3. For those of you who are Leads, or may consider potentially going on to Tier 3, this is a training of trainers model. This is your opportunity to "observe" and support the training, before moving on to the next step of "providing" the training to others!

What does an AAC Needs Assessment process look like? What will I be learning to do in Tier 2?

For a quick preview...here's a flowchart of the steps you will take to support good decisions around AAC strategies and tools. Click on the thumbnail to open up the document.

We will break down this process, step-by-step, and provide you with scaffolds (data gathering tools, report writing guides, report writing templates) to support you in building your competence and confidence in guiding this assessment process. You will rely on your team, and shared knowledge, to make final decisions and trial and evaluate tools (which is why AAC Foundations is so important!)

Can I earn CEUs for my participation?

Yes! In the "virtual" setting we can provide CEUs if: we can document full attendance (which means we will do some intermittent attendance checks); we need participants earning CEUs to have video on at all times; and if you need to step away for brief or short interruptions (we know life is complicated now!), please let the host know when you'll be back.