Alannah – a personal story to help you learn how to use some I-ASC resources

Alannah

I am 8 years old and I love being out and about and on the go. I like going to the park with my Dad and my favourite thing is horse riding. My pony is called Star. I love going riding on Star and being out of my wheelchair. My teacher says I have to use my communication aid in class but I hate it. It doesn't sound like me.

Adam (Alannah's teacher)

Alannah has made good progress over the past two years. Her focus and attention have really come on and I would like to push her on now with her language skills. It's a bit of a battle to get Alannah to use her communication aid. She prefers to vocalise but we don't always understand her and that's very frustrating for her. She got a new wheelchair last year and now her communication aid mount doesn't work anymore. I think if her aid was always there, it would really help. Also, I don't know how to edit it, Sue does that. It's hard to add things in quickly that we need in class particularly in the afternoons when Sue is working with another student.

Duncan (Alannah's Dad)

Alannah is a bit of a tomboy, she wants to be outside and on the go all the time. She has a wicked sense of humour and is really sociable. We understand everything she says at home but I'd like her to be able to use her communication aid with other kids and make friends. Her older brother Cameron is very involved with soccer and rugby and I can notice Alannah is missing out on social contact, it's much harder for her to make friends. I think the aid we have doesn't help, she can't always see the screen when we're at girl scouts and it's not mounted so we mostly leave it at home.

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Laura (Alannah's Speech/Language Therapist)

Alannah is great fun to work with and her family are amazing. They really include her in everything and she has a very active life. My work with Alannah has been around using her communication aid to support her language and literacy development. We've had cutbacks this year so I don't get to see her very often. So far, she's able to use her communication aid to comment and request. She mostly uses single symbols but can combine symbols if she is encouraged and supported by someone who understands the symbol system. Her literacy is coming on and I think we can push her literacy development, it might open up new opportunities for Alannah. For her new communication aid, I'd like one with built-in-resources to support literacy development. I'd also want something with the same communication symbols as her current aid, there are some questions about Alannah's visual-perception and I'd like to retain any learning she has already. I mean, we wouldn't accept changing someone's alphabet system just because we are changing reading books or English language writing activities, would we? Her symbol system is a stored 'literacy' system for her already and it helps her communicate. I think if the new aid was easier to edit that would be a help for all of us. Also, it would be important that Alannah can use it across the day. Given all the cutbacks, I don't know if Alannah will get funding so we have to think about cost too and getting the best functioning aid at the lowest cost.

Sue (Alannah's teaching assistant)

I work with Alannah in the classroom every day from 9-12. Alannah is great fun and I enjoy working with her. She chats using her voice, some manual signs and facial expressions. She is very clever in the ways she gets her message across and I can usually work out what she means. We don't use the aid much. I take it out for her for news time in the morning but often we don't use it after that. It doesn't really have

the words she needs and I have to plug in a keyboard to edit things. It's old now and quite

ugly. Alannah is quite self-conscious and she doesn't want to use it.

Practice activities

Using these descriptions of Alannah's situation, we provide them as examples to practice with to use some of the I-ASC resources. Below you will find three activities to try yourself using: (i) the AAC Log resource (pre-assessment), (ii) the AAC Log resource (individual system review), and (iii) the spidergram resource.

With reference to the *I-ASC Explanatory Model*, these activities get you to think about (i) child characteristics, and (ii) communication aid attributes.

Child characteristics and what is/is not working – appraisal using the AAC Log *(see I-ASC resources section to find it)*

(i) Pre-assessment information collation – can you complete this form with Alannah/or her support team in mind?

(ii) Individual AAC system review – can you complete this form by identifying the communication aid attributes that are working, or no longer working for Alannah? *(The usefulness of the aid attributes you identify also allude to her specific child characteristics).*

OR

Communication aid attributes – appraisal using the spidergram *(see I-ASC resources section to find it)*

(iii) Can you decide which of the following aid attributes are the 8 most important for your discussion of Alannah's needs? What does she need us to consider? Once you have identified the 8 most important (and this may take some debate!), use the *I-ASC spidergram template* and from your own perspective rate the 8 priority items agreed in terms of their relative importance in identifying the most appropriate communication aid or system for Alannah.

1. Appearance
2. Battery life
3. Consistency of layout and navigation
4. Cost
5. Durability and reliability
6. Ease of customisation
7. Ease of mounting on a range of equipment
8. Graphic representation

9. Number of key presses required to generate symbol or text output
10. Portability
11. Range of access methods
12. Size of output vocabulary
13. Supplier support
14. Type of vocabulary organisation
15. Vocabulary or language package(s)
16. Voice

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