What is Augmentative/Alternative Communication

- A system that builds on existing communication skills, but gives the student another way of communicating.

- Enables participation, encourages inclusion, fosters independence.
Laws that Govern AT requirements

- IDEA- Individuals with Disabilities Education Act
- ADA- Americans with Disabilities Act, Title 1
- Section 504 - of the Rehabilitation Act
Congressional Intent of IDEA 2004

IDEA 2004 affirms emphasis on AT as a means to support educational achievement

- Requires consideration of AT in the IEP process
- Places responsibility for decision-making with IEP committees
- Requires accessible instructional materials
AT Device

- Any item, piece of equipment or product system that is used to increase, maintain, or improve the functional capabilities of children with disabilities
Continuum from No or Low Tech to High Tech

Assistive Technology

No/Low Tech
- Simple
- Little Maintenance
- Limited/No Electronics

Mid Tech
- Some Maintenance
- Some training
- More Electronics

High Tech
- Complex Electronics
- More training
- More Maintenance
AT Service

- Any service that directly assists a child with a disability in the selection, acquisition, or use of an AT device
What does IDEA say about AT?

- AT must be considered each time an IEP is developed
- If necessary, an AT evaluation must be performed
- AT devices/services must be provided if required in the child’s IEP
Which Children Will Benefit?

- Orthopedically Impaired
- Language Delayed/Apraxic
- Pre-Verbal and Emergent Verbal
- Autistic
- Developmentally Delayed
- Intellectually Disabled
This is Patrick. He is using a Big Red® switch to turn on a tape recorder in music class. While the music is on, the other students play along with their instruments.

Patrick is using technology to participate.
This is Tim. He is using a Jelly Bean® Switch to participate in a game with his classmates.

Tim activates the switch to turn on the battery-operated Bed Bugs® Game causing the small plastic bugs to move and bounce around on the bed. His classmates then try to catch as many bugs as possible using a pair of plastic tongs.
This is Markesha. She is making a great treat for her family. She is partially participating by turning on the mixer to make chocolate chip cookies. She uses her cheek to turn on the mixer. The Universal Switch Mounting System and the Specs Switch is ideal for this switch location.

This Specs Switch is attached to a mounting system.
This is Sarah. She is working with her classmates to water plants for their spring project.

It is her responsibility to activate the WaterPik® using a Jelly Bean® Switch and PowerLink® 3 control unit.

The switch is mounted on a Sensitrac™ Pad with adjustable arm for positioning and stability.
By using the SLAT in timed mode, and her battery-adapted coin counter, Iggy is able to roll each handful of coins with only one switch activation using an adapted battery operated coin counter.
Here Donald has the PowerLink® 3 control unit set up to provide choices of activities he enjoys. Donald enjoys feeling the breeze from the fan and listening to his favorite music tape.
Alex activates the Talking Symbol to identify his next daily activity. Symbols are changed throughout the day.

Other ideas:
- Talking Photo’s
- Reminders for tasks
- Activity instructions
- Talking Bulletin Board
Using a BIG Sep-by-Step communicator, Nicole conducts a personal interview for an article in the school newspaper. Several questions are recorded in sequence on the device providing turn-taking conversation with her partner.
Noah uses the LITTLE Step-by-Step for home to school communication. He is able to relay information such as the days events, personal achievements, upcoming news, funny jokes and amusing stories.
You can tell by the smile on his face that Xia enjoys his job as a greeter at his school.

Using the iTalk2 he gives a general greeting to visitors with the first message and more specific information, such as directions, with the second message.
Josh uses the SuperTalker to make choices throughout his day. He was able to progress from two choice options to eight choice options using only one device.
The BookWorm provides opportunity for Adam to participate in the Power Lunch program at school. This program matches adult reading mentors with students to provide good role models for reading.
Benefits of AAC?

- Increases output
- Improves understanding
- Facilitates speech development
- Improves behavior
- Increases participation

- Concrete
- Multisensory
- Motivating
- Social
Myths About AAC

- Students won’t learn to speak.
- AAC is done only with the SLP.
- High tech is better than low tech.
- Students don’t need training.
- There is no funding available.
- Students will be self-motivated.
Barriers Affecting AAC

- Opportunity
- Policy
- Practice
- Attitude
- Knowledge
Vocabulary Selection

- Day Mapping
- Varied Settings
- Joint Effort Between Home, School & Student
Symbol Selection

- Objects
- Object Representation
- Photos
- Colored Drawings
- B & W Drawings
- Symbol + Word
- Word

- Size
- Color
- Type of Picture
Device Hierarchy

- Eye Gaze
- Calendar Box
- Single Target
- 2, 4, 8 Target
- Variable Targets
- Dynamic Display

- MCB
  - Individual board
  - Activity based
  - Choice making
Communication Devices
Low to High Tech
Engineering the Classroom

- Day Schedule
- Adapted Books
- Visual Strategies
- Props
Making cookies

Set up ingredients

bake cookies

Taking Orders

make cookies

bag cookies

set up utensils

put cookies on sheet

pay cashier

turn on

wash hands

soap

turn off

dry hands

throw away
My Feelings Book

sad

happy

afraid

Opposites Songbook
Goals

Responsibility of Classroom Teachers
- Classroom communication goals, data, monitoring and encouraging student’s communication system use

SLP Role
- Consult with teacher
- Provide drill and practice with students receiving direct service
Implementation

- Practice Opportunities
- Functional Situations
- Motivating Activities
- Modeling
- Data-System Trials
- Frequent Monitoring
Language, and the ability to communicate, are woven into every aspect of education.

It is the responsibility of every educator to facilitate the communication process to ensure the success of all students.