# Telepractice and Tele-AAC: Instruction, Training and the Impact of COVID-19

Nerissa Hall, PHD.CCC-SLP, ATP

Commūnicāre, LLC

# Nerissa Hall

FINANCIAL:

- Book royalties (Tele-AAC, Plural Publishing, USA)
- Managing Partner of Commūnicāre, LLC

NON-FINANCIAL

- ASHA SIG 12 – AAC
- ASHA SIG 18 – Telepractice
- RESNA

Commūnicāre, LLC

# Today's Plan

- Establish our understanding of AAC and how this can (and should) be implemented in a telepractice environment

  - Describe AAC, especially in the context of early learning
  - Contrast tele-AAC with telepractice
  - Detail service delivery option
  - Define the tele-AAC continuum of support

Commūnicāre, LLC

# What is AAC?

- Anything other than verbal speech

- Lite-tech
- Mid-tech
- High-tech
- Gestures and signs
- Facial expression

Commūnicāre, LLC

# What is AAC?

Augmentative Alternative Communication

- **Augmentative:** when used to supplement existing speech
- **Alternative:** when used in place of speech that is absent or not functional

# Aided vs. Unaided AAC

**Unaided Communication**
- Can be used without an external aid or tool:
  - Gestures
  - Vocalizations
  - Speech
  - Manual sign or other signing systems

**Aided Communication**
- Requires an aid, or includes tools such as:
  - Real & mini objects
  - Tactile Symbols, Pictures, Icons & Photos
  - Communication books
  - Speech Generated Devices (SGDs)

# AAC Assessment

- Physical assessment:
  - Hearing, motor (fine/gross), vision
- Cognitive assessment:
  - Memory, executive functioning, attention
- Language assessment:
  - Receptive and Expressive Language
- Communication need:
  - Environments, people, content
- Ability to communicate without Communication device:
  - Gestures, facial expression, pointing, physical manipulation
- Trial different devices and access mode
- Treatment Plan

# Access Methods

- Direct selection: using touch selection with finger or head stick, joystick, head pointer, eye-gaze

- Scanning: (automatic and step scanning)
  - Auditory scanning: user listens to auditory feedback to make a selection
  - Visual scanning: icons are highlighted and a switch is used to make a selection



Commūnicāre, LLC

# Symbols

- Real photos
- Mayer Johnson Boardmaker Picture Collection Set (PCS)
- Minspeak pictures (Prentke Romich Company)
- Pixons (combination of PCS and PRC)
- Symbolstix (News2you)
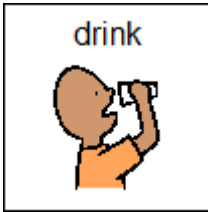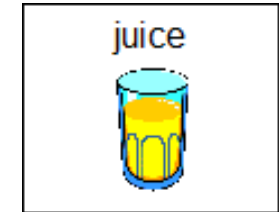
# No-Tech/Low-Tech/Lite-Tech

- Picture Exchange System (PECS)
- Communication books that require sequencing to compose message, with Velcro or pointing on a board

# Mid-Tech: Static Display

- Made with a paper overlay
- Digitized speech:
  - voice recording
- Set number of buttons
- Set number of overlays:
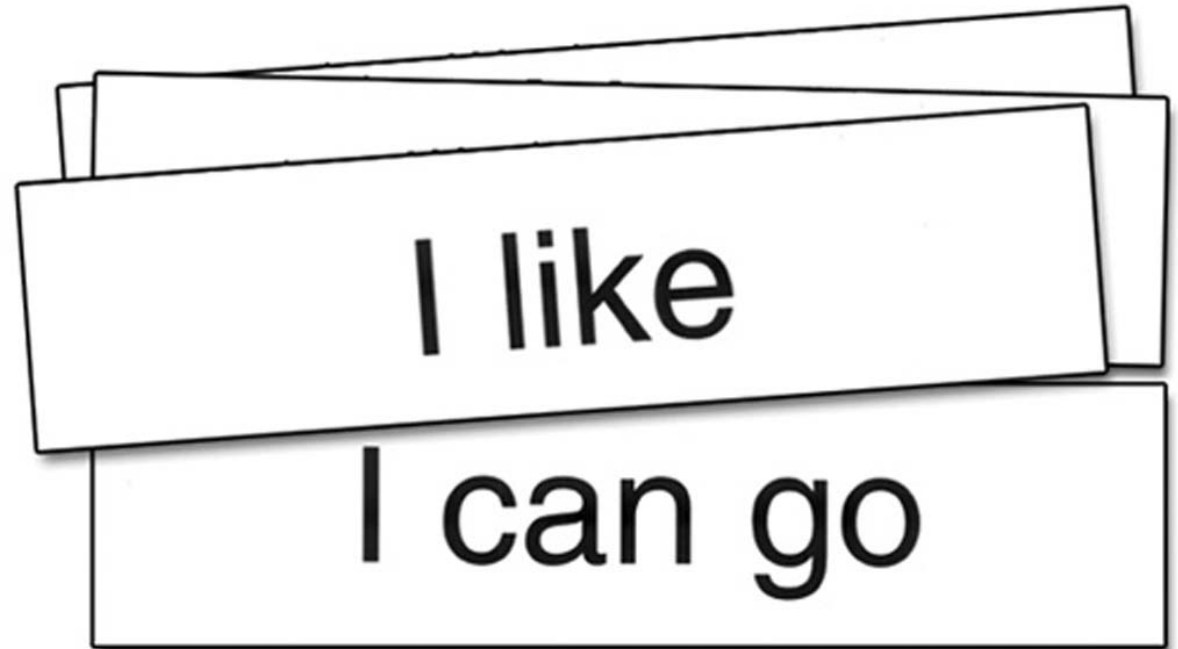  - slide in different overlays

# High-Tech: Dynamic display

# Vocabulary

- Core Language
- Fringe Vocabulary
- Phrases
- Single letters/keyboarding



I like

I can go
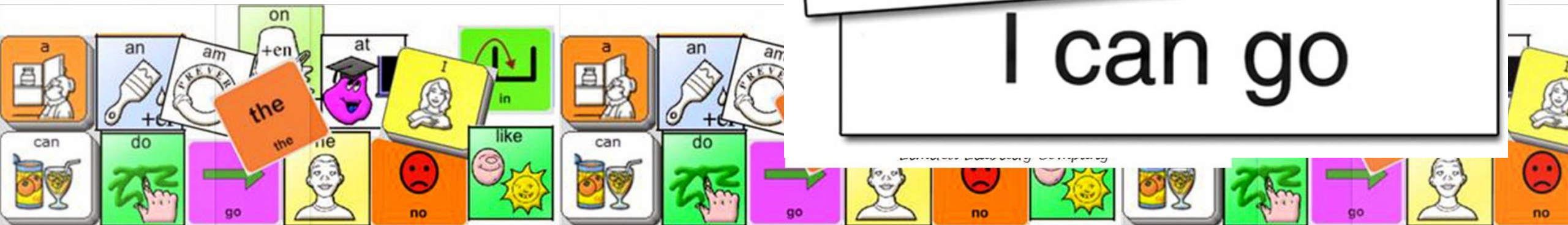
# AAC Fundamentals

- Multimodal process where effective communication is the ultimate goal

- 3-way process (triadic model)
  - Zone of proximal development
  - Input-output asymmetry

- A range of communicative functions
  - Direct, Request, Comment, Label, Joke, Question/ask, Tell, and State



Commūnicāre, LLC

# Partner Fundamentals

- Equip communication partners with important information about how to encourage communicative independence

- Creating Opportunities
  - How we set-up the environment and/or interact with an item of interest to encourage an individual to use AAC
    - Directing, requesting, commenting, asking for help

- Modeling
  - Says "I use AAC, too" and occurs in the absence of any expressive demand

- Prompting

- Language Expansion

# Tele-AAC vs. Telepractice

- Includes an AAC system or AAC tool

- The treating clinician has "eyes on" the AAC system (may mean having a second computer or iPad to be able to have a visual of the student, etc.)

Commūnicāre, LLC

| **Direct Services** | • Real-time services that replicate in-person sessions<br>• Can involve other team members<br>• Synchronous |
|---|---|

| **Consultative Services** | • Intensive consultation for those with little AAC experience<br>• Can be for supervision<br>• Can be "hands on"<br>• Synchronous or asynchronous |
|---|---|

| **Assessment Services** | • Supports collaboration<br>• Can be synchronous or asynchronous depending on case<br>• Less overwhelming for individual |
|---|---|

Commūnicāre, LLC

# Considerations for Privacy and Security

- Check in with ASHA for up-to-date information

- HIPAA compliance
  - BAA agreement

- Environmental considerations
  - Private treatment area
  - Who can hear?
  - Who can see?
  - How is content from the session shared/stored/secured?

Commūnicāre, LLC

# Candidacy for Tele-AAC

- Completing an initial tele-survey to determine
  - the players (the individual and their communication partner(s))
  - the environment
  - the technology/platform
  - how they want to connect (synchronous, asynchronous, scheduled, etc.)
- "Feature matching" for tele-AAC service delivery
  - It is not "yes" or "no," but rather how are we going to provide the service?

  Transparency: a clear discussion about what it will be and what it won't be

Commūnicāre, LLC

# Candidacy of the Individual

- Remember the triadic model of AAC use...
    - How much modeling and co-construction is needed?
    - Alertness and overall availability?
    - Ability to sustain attention (and for how long)?
    - Ability to shift/adjust attention
    - How often are movement breaks needed?
    - Tangible support options (like visual schedules, token boards, etc.), are they needed and how?
    - How do they best receive information (visual, auditory, tactile, manipulative, etc.)?
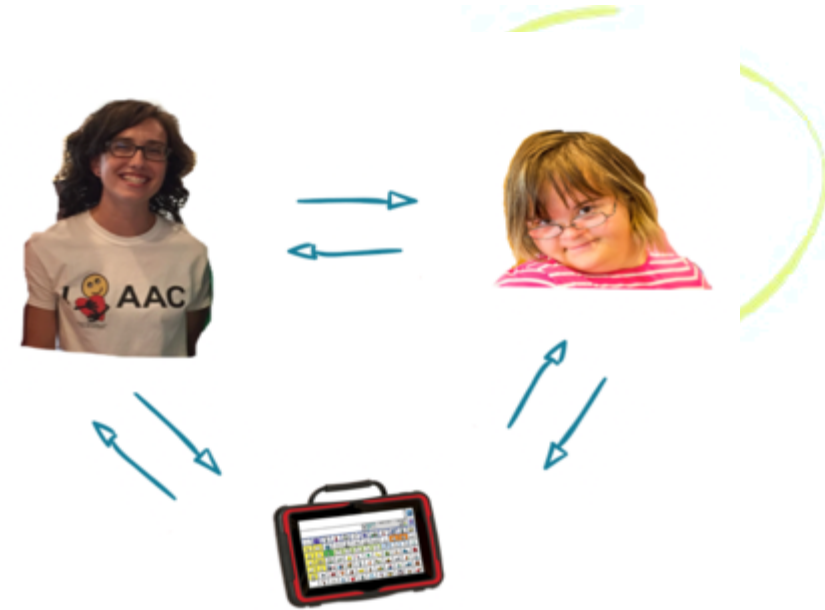
# Candidacy of the Partner



- Comfort level with technology
  - AAC technology, and
  - Tele-technology
- Comfort with AAC modeling (as a strategy)
- Familiarity with engagement strategies (behavior modification)
- Availability for live tele-sessions
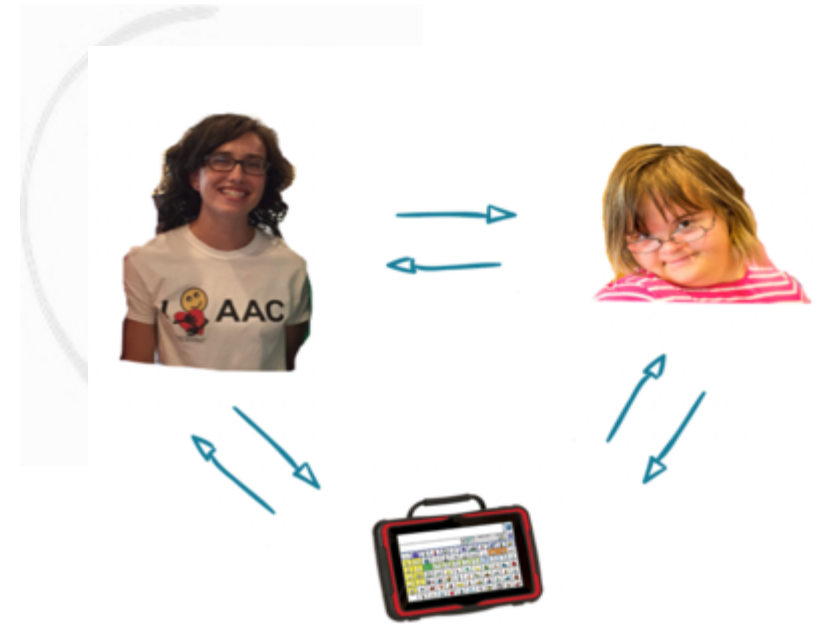
Commūnicāre, LLC

# Tele-candidacy: Initial tele-survey

**Communicare, LLC**
P: (403) 879-9531 | F: (800) 635-9636
Info@AACcommunicare.com
AACcommunicare.com

**Initial Tele Survey**

### Tele-tech

1. How do you prefer to connect? (select all that apply)

☐ email ☐ live video conferencing ☐ sharing recorded videos ☐ video tutorials ☐ phone calls ☐ other: _____

2. What technology would you use (that has a webcam)?

☐ phone ☐ tablet ☐ laptop ☐ Chromebook ☐ desktop ☐ other: _____

3. What is your comfort level with that technology?

☐ very comfortable ☐ comfortable ☐ open to training ☐ not my strong suit ☐ terrified ☐ other: _____

4. What is your comfort level using more than one of those technologies at once?

☐ very comfortable ☐ comfortable ☐ open to training ☐ not my strong suit ☐ terrified ☐ other: _____

5. What platform are you familiar or comfortable with?

☐ Zoom ☐ GoToMeeting ☐ Webex ☐ Clocktree ☐ Doxy.me ☐ other: _____

6. Internet Service Stability

☐ Great ☐ Good ☐ sometimes patchy ☐ often patchy ☐ not reliable ☐ other: _____

### AAC Tech

1. Do you have the individual's AAC System at home?

☐ YES ☐ NO

---

2. Do you have an alternative lite-tech (paper-based version) of the AAC System at home?

☐ YES ☐ NO

3. Do you have a way of charging your AAC System at home?

☐ YES ☐ NO

4. How familiar/comfortable are you with the AAC System?

☐ very comfortable ☐ comfortable ☐ open to training ☐ not my strong suit ☐ terrified ☐ other: _____

5. How familiar/comfortable are you with supporting your child's use of the AAC System (modeling, language expansion, prompting)?

☐ very comfortable ☐ comfortable ☐ open to training ☐ not my strong suit ☐ terrified ☐ other: _____

6. How familiar/comfortable are you with troubleshooting tech-issues with the AAC System (speech output not working, frozen screen, etc.)?

☐ very comfortable ☐ comfortable ☐ open to training ☐ not my strong suit ☐ terrified ☐ other: _____

7. How familiar/comfortable are you with identifying and creating communication opportunities for the individual using AAC?

☐ very comfortable ☐ comfortable ☐ open to training ☐ not my strong suit ☐ terrified ☐ other: _____

### Tele-Environment

1. Where will the tele-session take place? (closed door room, at a desk, shared space, etc.)

2. Other people around the tele-environment? (siblings)

3. Days/Times available for tele-sessions.

---

### Communication Partner

1. Comfort level managing student's engagement and focus to task? (using token reinforcement, visual schedule)

☐ very comfortable ☐ comfortable ☐ open to training ☐ not my strong suit ☐ terrified ☐ other: _____

2. Communication partner's other responsibilities at the time of tele-session?

☐ siblings ☐ work ☐ available to focus on tele ☐ not my strong suit ☐ terrified ☐ other: _____

### Individual

1. Ability to sustain attention?

☐ 60 min ☐ 30 min ☐ 15 mins ☐ 10 min ☐ 5 min ☐ other: _____

2. Need for visual schedule?

☐ YES ☐ NO

3. Need for token reinforcement or reinforcement schedule?

☐ YES ☐ NO

4. What is your child's best access method for learning? (choose all that apply)

☐ visual ☐ auditory ☐ tactile ☐ hands on ☐ other: _____

5. Motivating topics/engaging tasks for your child? (TV shows, movies, books, characters, places, etc.)
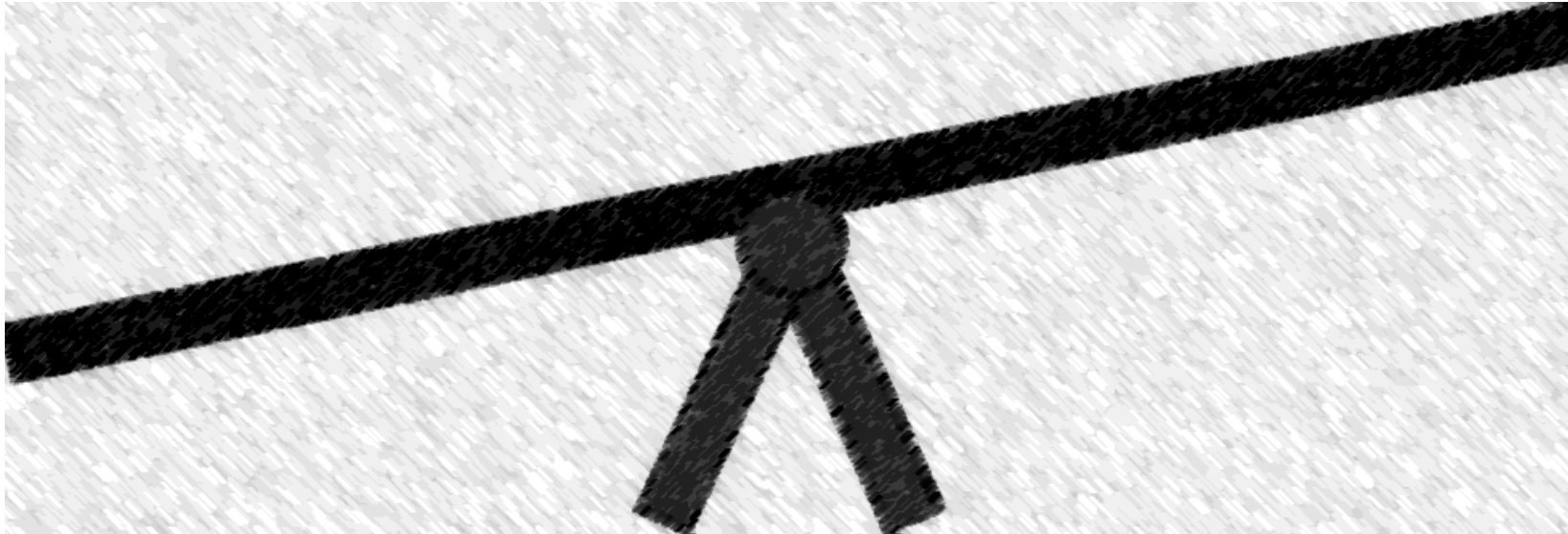
**Communicare, LLC**

# Tele-AAC Service Types

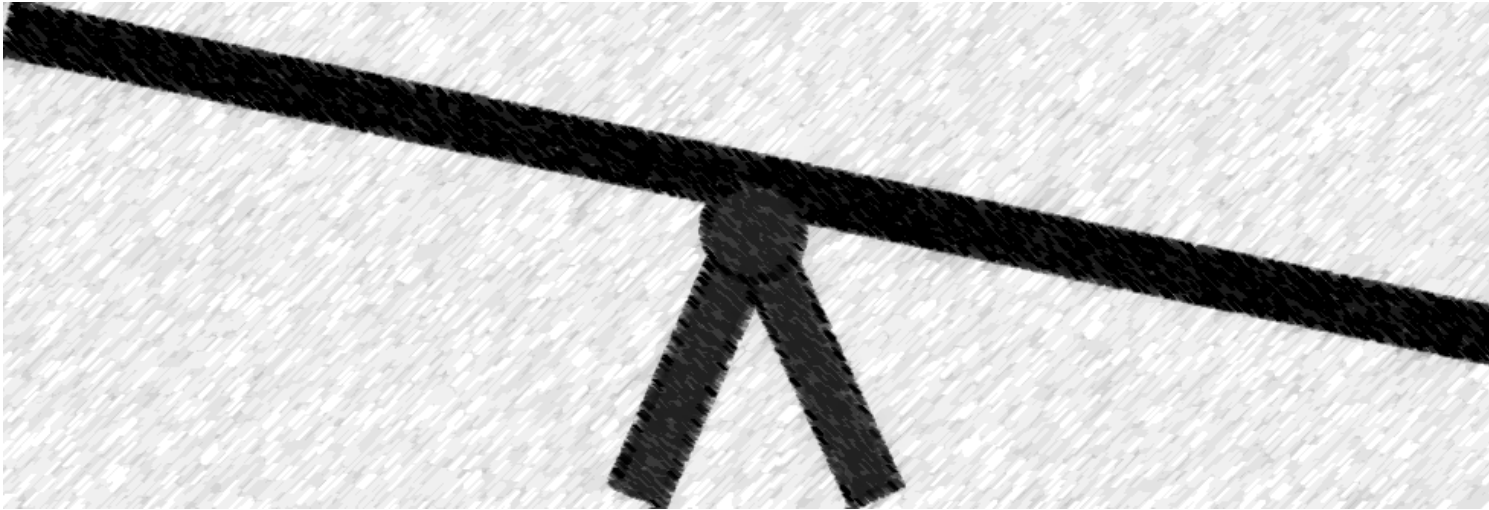...consider tele-AAC consultation

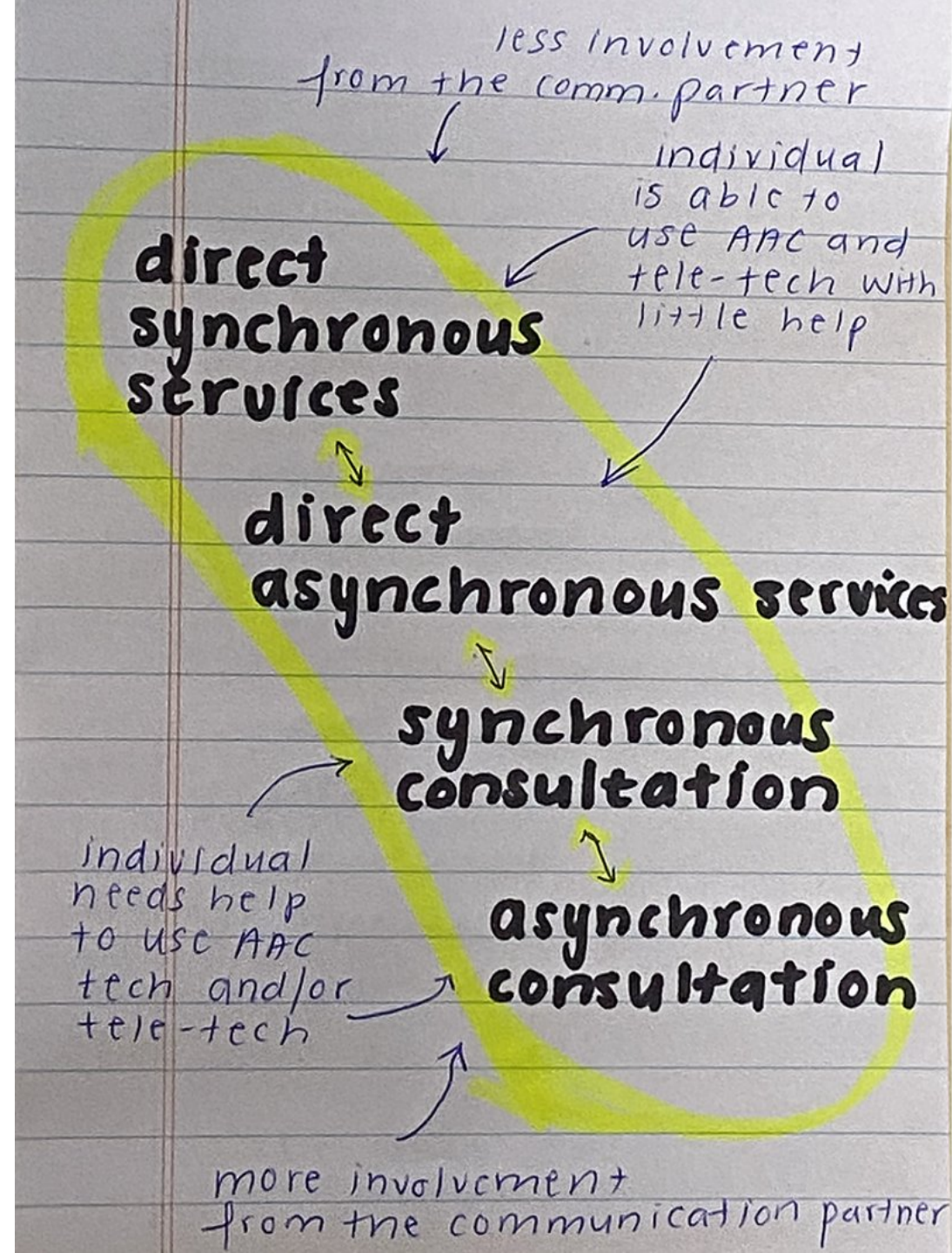**AAC modeling & co-construction**



**Independent**

**AAC use**

*Communicare, LLC*

# Tele-AAC Service Types

...consider tele-AAC direct service delivery



**Independent**

**AAC use**

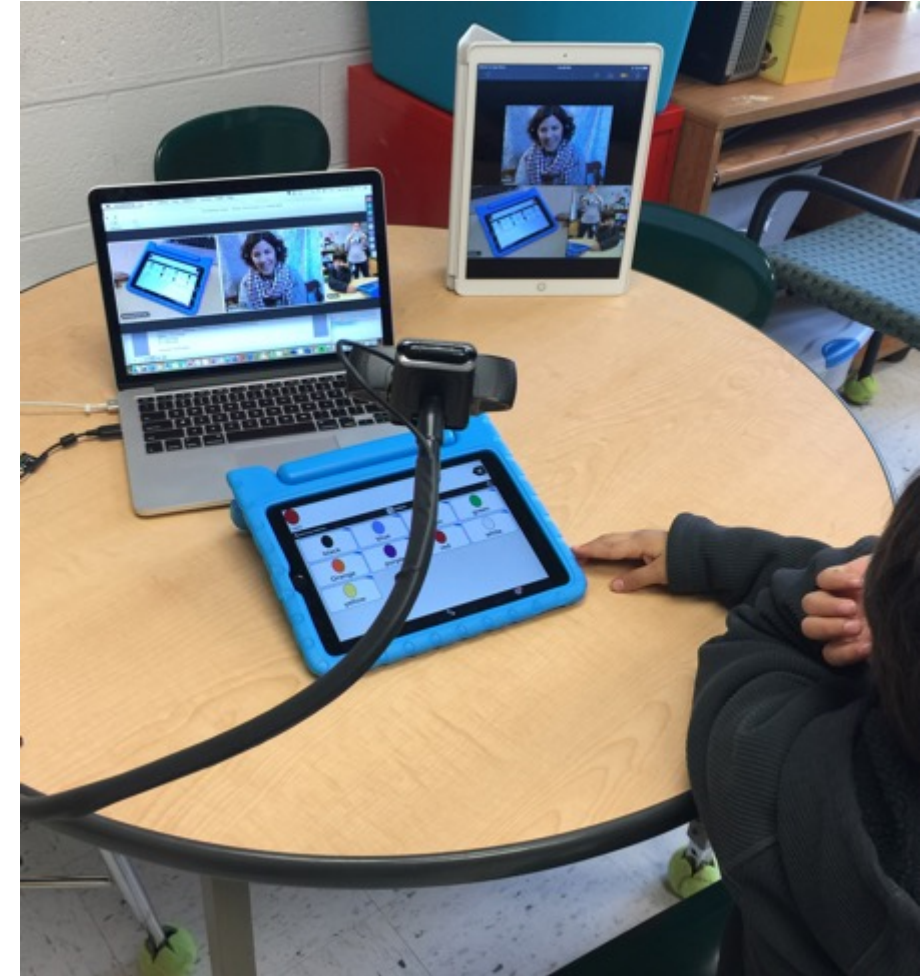**AAC modeling & co-construction**

*Communicare, LLC*

# Continuum of Support

# Tele-AAC Equipment Needs

- Display screen
- Display software (Zoom, GoToMeeting, etc.)
  - Screensharing capabilities
  - Annotation
  - Chat
- Cameras
  - One (with toggle)
  - Two (for simultaneous viewing)
- AAC system/emulation
- Internet (hardwire when possible)
- Tripod/mounting (hands-free ideally)



Commūnicāre, LLC

# Tele-AAC Software Suggestions

- Pictures/photos

- Videos

- Word processing/presentation tools
  - Document
  - Slides

- Interactive websites

- Back-up mode of communication (to triage challenges with connectivity, etc.)

Using headphones might affect playback of audio when sharing videos or websites offering sound

Communicare, LLC

# Tele-engagement Training and Support

- "Must-do's" before session begins
  - clear expectations of partner's participation
- Involve visuals (multimedia)
- Careful management of amount of verbal information
- Use of variable prompting
- "Bookends"
  - Routine to the session
  - Consistency to support focus on content rather than navigation/manipulation
- Motivating tasks

Commūnicāre, LLC

# Arranging the Tele-environment

**Individual's End**

- Location of session area
- Minimizing distractibility of people and items
- Clearing the desktop
- Physical tools (schedule, hands-on material, fidgets)
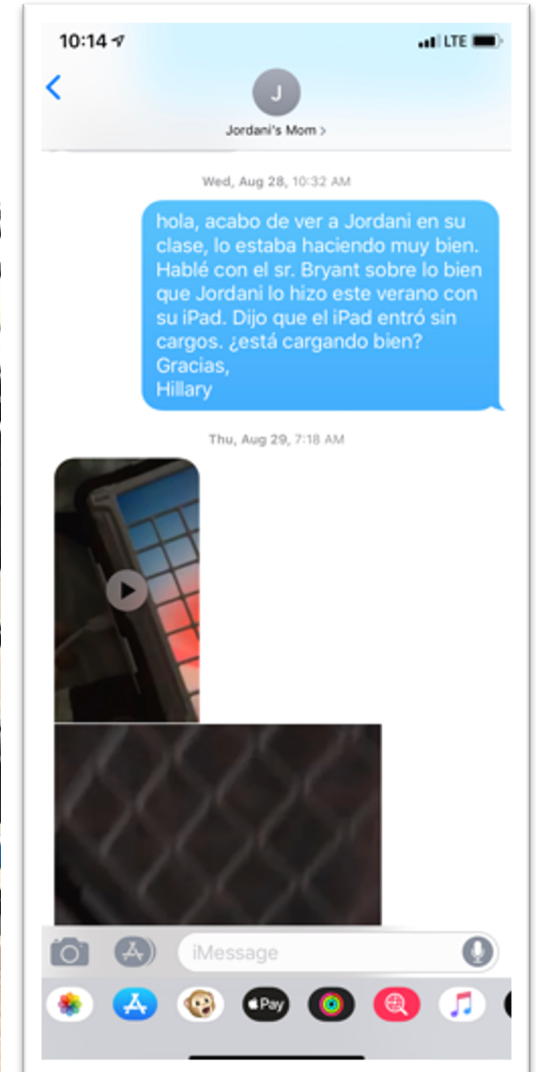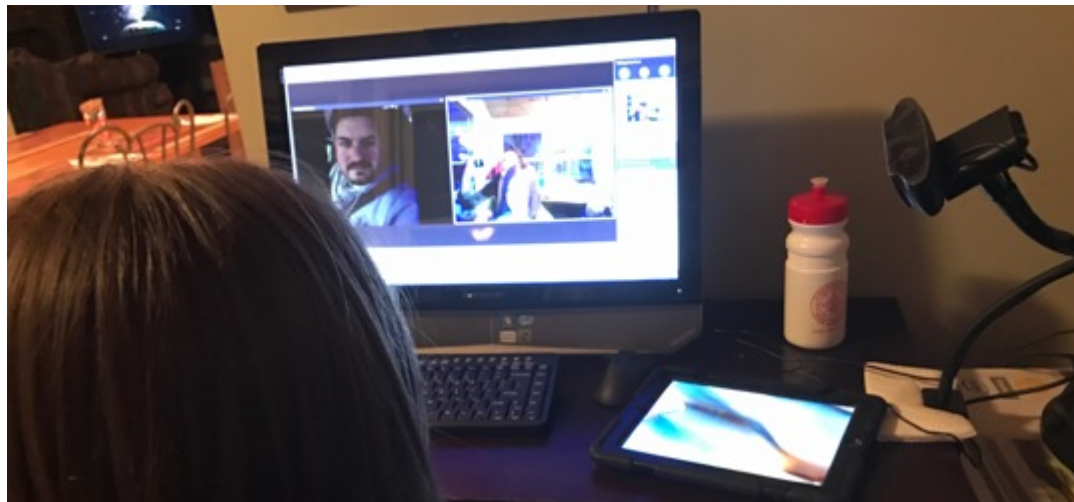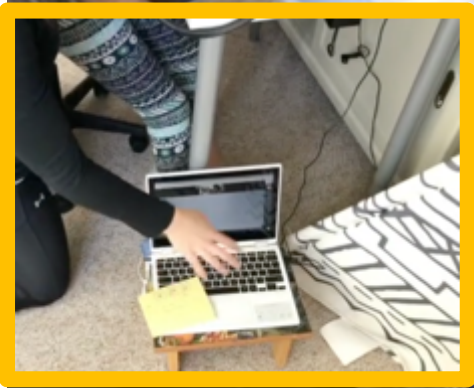
**Clinician's End**

- Location of session area
- Minimizing distractibility of people and items
- Visual clutter of screen
- Organizing materials for easy sharing
- Items available for referencing

Commūnicāre, LLC

# Clinician Set-up
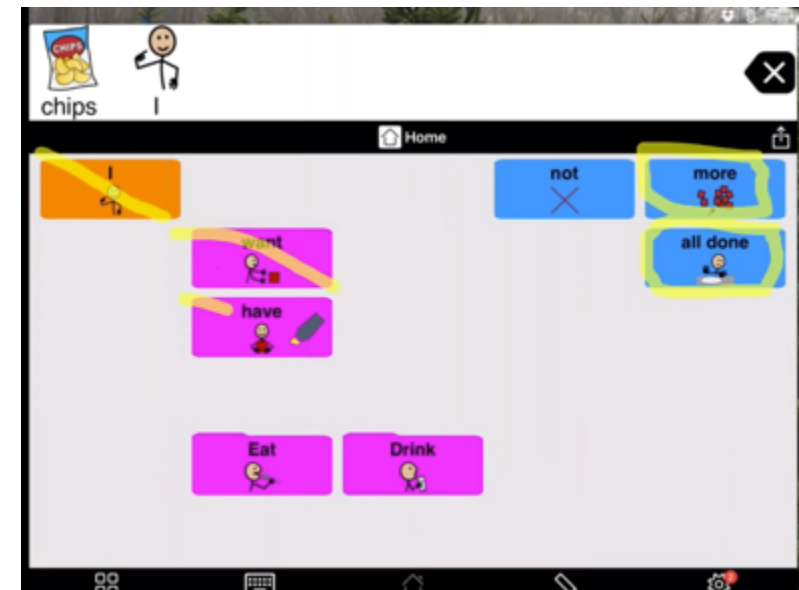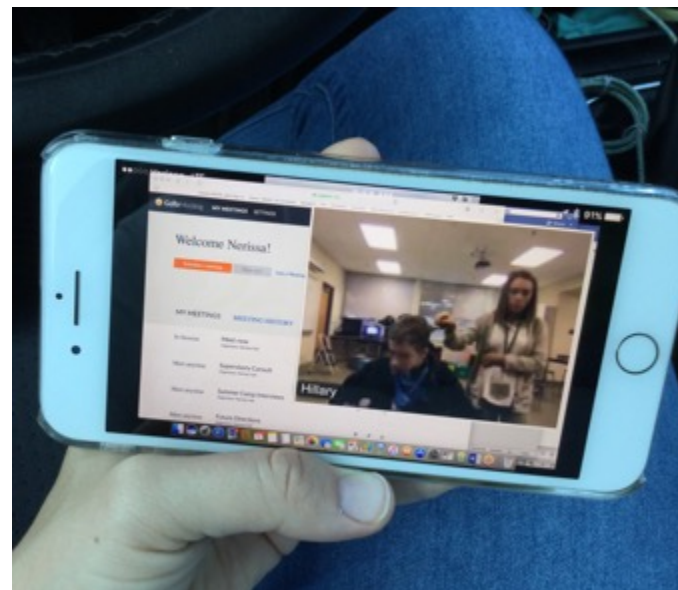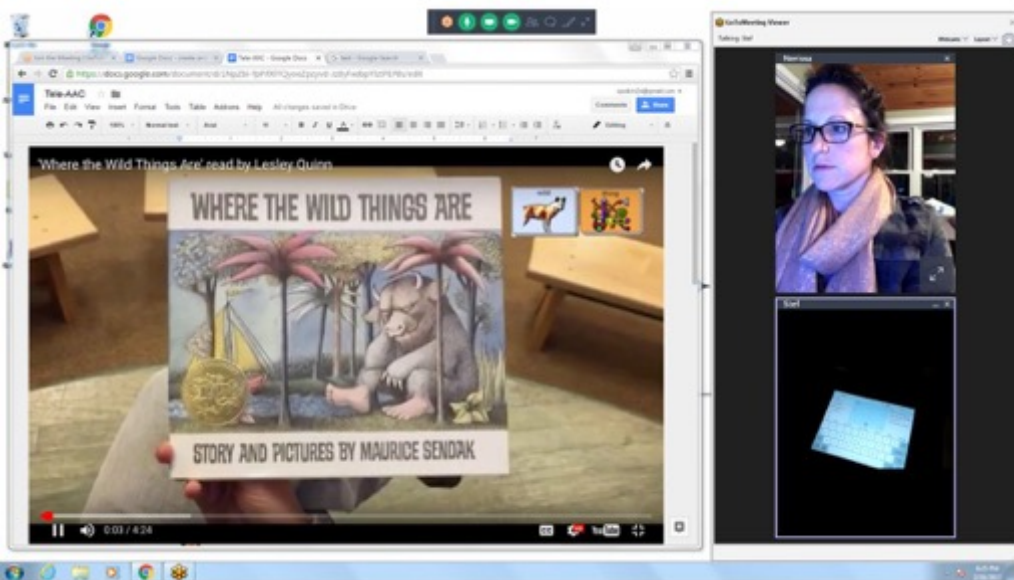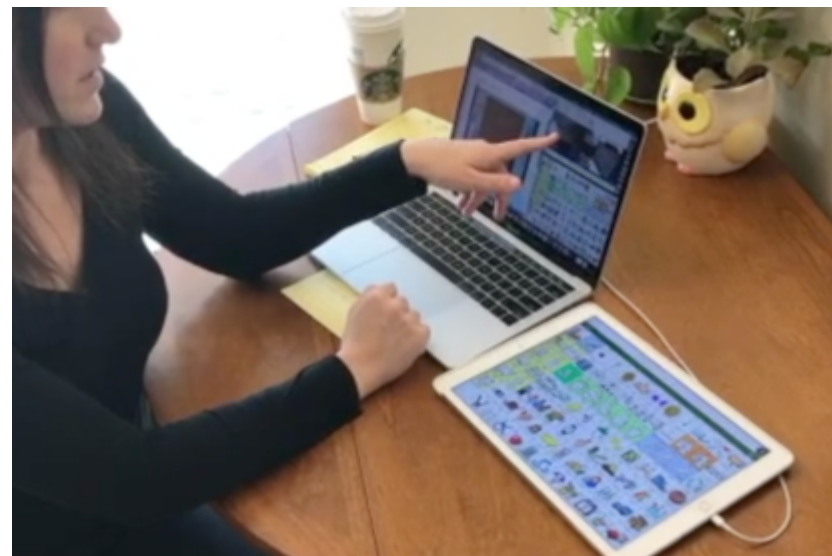
**Individual Set-up**

hola, acabo de ver a Jordani en su clase, lo estaba haciendo muy bien. Hablé con el sr. Bryant sobre lo bien que Jordani lo hizo este verano con su iPad. Dijo que el iPad entró sin cargos. ¿está cargando bien?
Gracias,
Hillary

| **Direct Text-Based Services** | • Involves screen-sharing intervention materials that includes text.<br>• The individual using AAC needs to be able to read. |
| --- | --- |
| **Direct Tele-AAC with 2 SGDs** | • Both the individual and the clinician have SGDs.<br>• Webcams (J-Mount) are used to project the image of the AAC system on both ends. |
| **Direct Tele-AAC with 1 SGD** | • The clinician uses simulation/emulation software to model target words/phrases.<br>• The image of the individual's AAC device is projected through a J-Mount or comparable tool. |

Commūnicāre, LLC

# Consultation via Tele-AAC

- The clinician works with team members that are working with an individual needing AAC support.

- In ==real time== or ==store-and-forward.==

- May involve the individual or not.

- Real video or photo images or simulation/emulation tools.

Commūnicāre, LLC

# Tele-AAC Consultation: Synchronous or Asynchronous

- Teams will share videos of sessions, issues they may be having with the device, or where they are struggling with modeling.

- We can respond with a video, picture, document, or explanation.
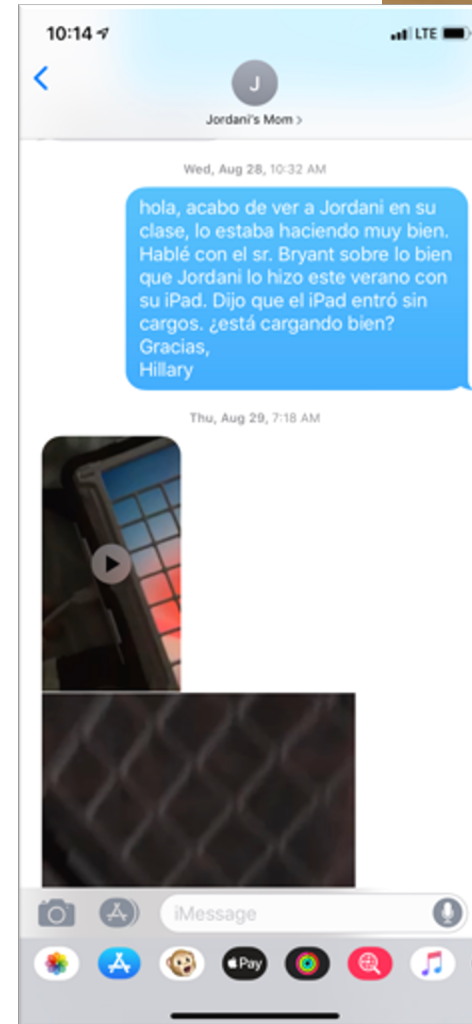
www.AACcommunicare.com

Facebook

Twitter

Instagram

hall@AACcommunicare.com